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LOVE AND DUTY.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY THOMAS CONSTABLE,

FOR

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

LONDON	HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.
CAMBRIDGE	MACMILLAN AND CO.
DUBLIN	M'OLABHAN AND GILL.
GLASGOW	JAMES MACLEHOSSE.



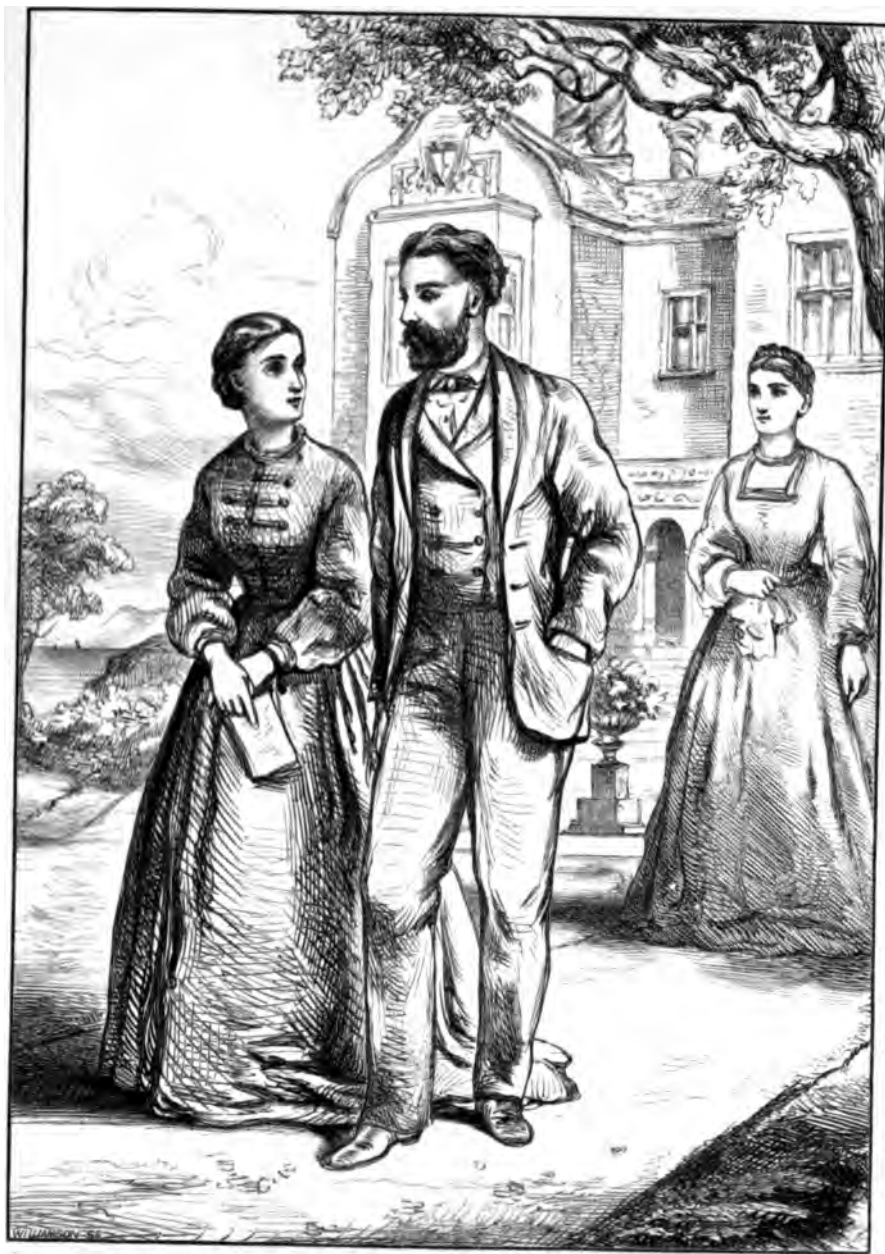
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[REDACTED]



CROOKHAM COURT.—PAGE 104.





LOVE AND DUTY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'BASIL ST. JOHN.'

Novels




EDINBURGH: EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS.

1866.

250. b. 261.





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CHAPTER I.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

‘My lady will ride to Uppingham,
To Uppingham, forsooth will she ;
And I myself appointed for to be the man
To wait on my ladye.’

Ballad, 1609.

‘**A** TELEGRAM for you, my lady,’ said a footman, touching his hat, and putting his head into a railway carriage which had just been driven into Swindon station ; ‘ the stationmaster gave it to me to give your ladyship.’

‘ For me ? ’ said the eldest of its three occupants. ‘ Give it to me, Frances,’ and with a trembling hand she tore it open :—

‘ Come directly, my lord is not so well, and wishes you to return to nurse him.’

The lady who had just opened the telegram—Lady Okehampton—was a tall slight woman, who might be pronounced on close examination to be a year or two

the wrong side of forty, but who did not, to a casual observer, look more than five-and-thirty years of age; with a profusion of very light golden hair, soft blue eyes, a graceful figure, low sweet voice, and high-bred manner—a woman who you could see at a glance had gone through life leaning on others. Now she turned to her daughter, who occupied the same carriage, and said, in rather a puzzled manner—

‘My dear, what a sad thing!’

‘Yes, dear mother, but you have only ten minutes to settle what we shall do. I suppose, though, you must go back?’

Lady Okehampton looked up surprised, and in a somewhat firmer tone said—

‘Of course, I must go if your father wants me; but how, is the only question.’

As the word ‘father’ passed Lady Okehampton’s lips, Frances Fortescue’s brow slightly contracted; but she answered only—

‘I suppose I had better go on to Cossington, according to the original plan? Claude is going to Bristol, you know, so he can see me so far. I am not afraid of the rest of the journey; and the next train will take you back to Lord Okehampton in time for dinner. Won’t that do, mother?’

‘Yes, my dear, you are quite right, as usual. I don’t know about Claude chaperoning you, it’s rather odd, isn’t it? However, under the circumstances, I don’t think it will signify very much, and besides, it can’t be helped. I really think, and can hope, there is no great thing wrong with my lord, and that he is only fidgety. It’s a dreadful disappointment to me not to go to Cosington. Mind you give my best love to the dear people. Such an age since I have seen George Hervey; he must be getting an old man now! You have seen Mrs. Drummond lately, so you will not feel amongst strangers. I will join you as soon as I can, dear child; upon my word, though, it is rather provoking.’

‘Say *very*, dear mother. I can’t bear the idea of going there alone, and just as I thought I had got you to myself for six weeks for our quiet visits.’

‘God bless you, my child; write directly. Claude, take great care of her; but I know you will.’

The party were now standing just outside the railway carriage collecting Lady Okehampton’s luggage. A considerable crowd had gathered near them, and there was the usual bustle that is to be seen on the platform of Swindon station, so that when the individual who had been addressed as Claude turned round and said in a very loud voice, ‘O yes, I’ll see her all safe enough; a little

practice for me, you know. Shall soon have to do it altogether—eh?’ all eyes were directed to the party. Frances coloured crimson, put down her veil quickly, and with a gesture of impatience hurried back into the carriage.

The whistle sounded, the guard passed along the carriages, saying, ‘Stand back if you please, ma’am’, and ‘Are you going on, sir?’ and Claude jumped in just as the train began to move off.

‘Goodbye, mother,’ said Frances, as she leant out of the window and watched Lady Okehampton till she could no longer see her, and then threw herself back in her seat half petulantly, exclaiming, ‘And when one knows that there is nothing the matter; it’s too bad of Lord Okehampton. Poor mother!’ and the girl sighed heavily.



CHAPTER II.

A SKETCH OF THE PAST.

*'Il n'y a rien de bon ni de mauvais
Si ce n'est que par comparaison.'*

HAVING thus introduced our heroine, it will be as well to explain a little who and what she is.

Frances Fortescue was the only child of a rich Gloucestershire squire, a Colonel Fortescue, who had married, when he was very young, the daughter and heiress of a neighbouring proprietor. They had been desperately in love with each other ; had married ; left London, settled on his property, and given themselves up to each other. He was devoted to his pretty young wife, who had no great intellect to boast of, but was one of those gentle clinging natures that seem to take out all their energies in their affections. She thought her husband the wisest and cleverest man that ever lived, and herself the most fortunate of women.

For three years only did their dream of happiness last ; one December morning saw Colonel Fortescue mounting his thoroughbred hunter at the hall-door, whilst his wife stood by patting the old favourite, and making the baby she held in her arms press her fat little hands on its soft skin—and the evening of that day saw him return a cold and lifeless corpse to his home ; the bright joyous spirit had fled for ever, and at twenty-two Mrs. Fortescue was left alone in the world.

For days and days she lay insensible with brain-fever, and knew not until long after her husband's death that she was sole guardian to the child, and sole executrix to the will. The bulk of the money was settled on the little girl ; but a large jointure was secured to Mrs. Fortescue, quite independent of the fortune and acres the child would inherit.

Some of the entailed property went to Sir Victor Trevelyan, a distant cousin, a man about sixteen years Mrs. Fortescue's senior, and to whom, when she was a little recovering from the shock, she turned for help and counsel, as it was her nature to turn.

For some few years she lived a widow, and mourned truly and sincerely over her husband's memory ; but at last her gentle and affectionate nature yielded to the entreaties of her family, and considerations of the good

of her child. When her little Frances was nine years of age, she married Lord Okehampton, who was already an old man, and who, stern politician and absorbed in public life though he was, had been much captivated by the pretty little widow, and thought she would make a very ornamental head of his house. He was always kind to her, and, though he was a fidgety troublesome invalid, Lady Okehampton was herself quite happy in her second marriage, and had given birth to two boys, who at the time this history opens were about twelve and fourteen years old, and at Eton.

To Frances Fortescue, already a high-spirited child when her mother married again, her stepfather's home had never been a happy one. She was far too young to regret her father's death from personal recollection ; but having in her early years been her mother's only care and idol, she felt the difference, child though she was, when the home was changed, her mother's time much occupied, first by her husband, and then by the new babies ; and when she found herself, though her mother loved her as much as ever, consigned to the care of nurses and governesses.

Lord Okehampton was, as we have said, much devoted to his fair young wife ; but to the child Frances he had never taken a fancy, and she had early felt this as chil-

dren do feel. Indeed, Warnborough Court was not a place where a child would be happy—Lord Okehampton's only idea about children being that they must be snubbed and kept in the background.

He was a stiff old-fashioned Tory in creed, stern and unbending. There was in truth a larger gap than he or they were aware of between him and those whom he professed to follow, who sometimes were placed in awkward positions by the uncompromising spirit of the veteran politician who ruled the whole of the side of the county in which he lived. His magnificent property gave him enormous influence, and Lord Okehampton could boast that he returned one county member, and two for boroughs. Years had crept on, and saw him aged and enfeebled in body. His wife was much tied by his almost constant illness from slight attacks of gout; hardly would he allow her an hour from his presence. She was his nurse, his companion, and his secretary. Even now, with the greatest difficulty had she succeeded in persuading the old man that she required a little change of air and scene; and it was only at the last moment he had granted her leave to accompany his stepdaughter to visit some distant connections of her father's in the west of England. Full of the enjoyment in prospect, Lady Okehampton left her

home. Unfortunately the anxiety and fidget brought on a fit of the gout, which prevented her lord attending a political meeting in London, a meeting which had furnished the excuse for her getting away, and the result had been the telegram, which we have seen to interrupt the journey so happily begun.

How Captain Claude Trevelyan came to be of the party, and on such easy terms with the mother and daughter, we must now explain.

From the time that Frances' mother had first been left a widow, she had been in the habit of paying pretty constant visits to Sir Victor Trevelyan at Castle Grange. The baronet had one only child, a son, who was a few years older than Frances Fortescue, and naturally the boy was a good deal with her, as the little girl invariably accompanied her mother on these visits. They played together, they rode together, and were constant companions. Mrs. Fortescue, whose disposition led her to lean on any one for advice, would consult Sir Victor about Frances' nurses and her health, and then later, as the child's high spirit showed itself, would let herself be advised by him in the selection of governesses. Insensibly he obtained much influence over her. Mrs. Fortescue, as a girl, had never faced responsibility in any way; as a young married woman she had looked

to her husband to settle everything; and now she was occasionally much embarrassed by the multiplicity of cares that fell to her lot. Sir Victor, who, to do him justice, was no bad judge of character, watched this peculiarity carefully, and acted on it—he had his own reasons. The more Mrs. Fortescue came to him for counsel, the more he taught her to seek it. He evinced the keenest interest in Frances, and would treat her with marked favour. She, however, with the natural instinct of a highly straightforward nature, did not reciprocate the feeling. She was too young to see that he was not sincere; but somehow felt she could not like him, and would turn in preference to the rough playfellow who would knock her down, and occasionally fight with her, but with whom she was soon friends again, and whom she thoroughly trusted.

So things went on for some years, till Frances was about eight years old. Sir Victor, who ever encouraged and sought Mrs. Fortescue's visits, had been on one occasion even more affectionate in his interest than usual. It was one morning when Sir Victor had been with Mrs. Fortescue watching the children start on their ponies from the hall-door, that he had said, as they turned to go in, 'A pretty little pair, my dear Mrs.

Fortescue, a very pretty little pair. What should you think of their becoming a pair through life ?'

The mother looked up surprised, and laughingly answered, 'My dear friend, Claude is a mere child, only twelve, and Frances only eight. But he is a dear boy, and I am very fond of him. He is a good boy, isn't he?'

'He is as good a lad as ever lived,' answered the baronet; 'not over clever; but to my mind people are none the better for being so desperately clever. He takes after his poor mother's family. But now, I should say, just the sort to make a good husband.'

At this Mrs. Fortescue laughed merrily; but something interrupted the conversation, and the subject was not resumed then.

Sir Victor had accomplished his purpose, and had put the first idea of a plan which he had long had in his head, before his guest, and this plan had been the result of careful study of his own rent-roll, mortgages, and liabilities, on one side, and of the broad acres and large accumulations which he knew were gathering for Frances' majority, on the other.

A year or two passed on. The next visit Frances' mother paid to Castle Grange it was as Lady Okehampton. Again the boy and girl were thrown

together by the judicious father, and again his good qualities extolled. This happened year by year; in each visit Lord Okehampton engrossed more and more of his wife's time, and the young ones were more left to themselves. Very little beyond an occasional reminding word was said by Sir Victor, but he never let the idea of an alliance pass from Lady Okehampton's mind, till at last, though nothing had been said to Frances, it became a sort of understood thing between the parents that the little lady was to marry her cousin Claude.

As for Frances, Lord Okehampton treated her with decided harshness. Her baby brothers were no companions to her. Though she idolized her mother, she saw but little of her, being much abandoned to the care of a stiff old English governess, who, do what she would, could not sympathize with such a fresh joyous nature as Frances'. The child's life was never made happy to her, save when she was at Castle Grange, where she was petted and made much of, and everything made by Sir Victor to give way to her wishes. What wonder, then, that her mother, after a morning spent closeted with Sir Victor, came to her, and beginning by caressing her in a way to which the girl was not much used now, said, 'My

dear love, I've been thinking a great deal about you, and so has your father. You know, dear, we are very anxious for your happiness, and so we have settled that if you and dear Claude could be happy together, you had much better marry him; he would be a very good husband for you. Do you like him, dear? He is so good and steady'—and Lady Okehampton looked anxiously round, as though seeking counsel and support from the walls.

Frances' eyes flashed bright for one moment, as she answered, 'Lord Okehampton cannot dispose of me in this way. He is not my guardian.'

'My love, no one wishes to dispose of you; we all are thinking only of your happiness. Will you reflect about it, my child?' said her mother, as she put her arms round Frances' neck, and kissed her fondly.

Frances was still a mere child in years—barely seventeen,—and in thoughts and ideas she was even younger. Of the world and the things of the world she knew nothing. Moreover, she was very lonely. She sat a long hour on the floor at her mother's feet, the mother's hand being passed caressingly over the soft fair hair, and they talked long and openly—quite openly on Frances' part. At last, after much conversation, she ended by telling her mother that she

would try and think of it, but 'she could not promise, would not engage herself.' Lady Okehampton was well satisfied, and ended by saying, 'There is no hurry, darling; you will come out in the spring; but it would be infinite comfort to me to think you had the protection of this sort of engagement.' Frances sighed. Perhaps in her half-childish day-dreams a matter-of-fact arrangement of this kind had hardly been her idea of happiness.

'Well, dear mother, I will think about it. I have seen but little of Claude lately, and can hardly fancy he would care for me in that sort of way.'

'Ah, you should hear Sir Victor talk of Claude's devotion to you.'

Here the matter dropped for the time; but the idea was kept constantly before the girl, and when Frances Fortescue came out, it was announced that she was 'engaged to her distant cousin in the Guards'—an engagement which, however, was only to be fulfilled at an indefinite period.

Miss Fortescue was 'immensely admired,' and made a 'great sensation' when she appeared in London. She was above the average height—fair, with abundant auburn hair, catching here and there golden lights in the sun—a broad, smooth forehead, violet eyes, strongly

pencilled eyebrows, full and beautifully-shaped lip, a figure that even the Venus of Milo might have envied ---such was our heroine. The charms of her mind were even superior to her personal attractions; quick of perception, to a more than average amount of common sense and judgment she united great powers of understanding, and a strange thirst for knowledge, not very common in so young a girl. Her manner was gentle and playful, but her will was strong, and had been but little controlled, for small judgment had been observed in her education. The child had had governesses, steady-going old-fashioned people, who but little entered into their pupil's ardent nature, and were constantly nonplussed by her questions. She would doubt and question, and insist on the reasons being given to her for the things she was taught. Faith entered but little into her character as yet.

Her mother had perhaps never 'thought' in her life. To appeal to her was useless. Frances was left to herself; and, at the age of seventeen, reserved, self-concentrated, and self-reliant, with no hand capable of guiding her was she launched on the London world.

So she was Claude's promised wife, and Sir Victor took good care to announce the fact. Notwithstanding this, however, some few, bolder than others, would

make faint attempts to supplant the cousin. She heeded them not; for the truth was, that though Frances was heart-whole as far as her cousin went, no one else touched her affections, and none received encouragement. She was no flirt. She did not know what it was to love. She was content; and, in her ignorance, imagined that that was all she could expect. Her mother's heart was set upon this marriage, and her home daily became more *triste* to her, as Lord Okehampton's health failed him more and more, and he required more constant attendance from his devoted wife. Frances knew she liked no one better. She longed for peace and rest in a house of her own, and fancied that there she would find happiness and the sphere of usefulness, which had always been her ambition. Claude was tolerably attentive to her, and in his rough sort of way thought he was fond of her. He was quiet and steady—very steady, his father said,—but he was singularly empty-headed, and in heart and disposition entirely unsuited to the higher and finer character of the life-partner his father had chosen for him. All this Lady Okehampton did not see. Not being in the least clever herself, she did not see how unequal Claude was to the exigencies of his position. Frances allowed this engagement to go on for two years. Little had

ever been said by either of the parties concerned, but it was somehow an understood thing that the marriage was to take place when she was twenty-one, and now there wanted but five months of that time.

Poor girl! hers was a curious and melancholy life. To her mother she was devoted with an affection that drew out all the tenderest points of her character. She was half jealous of the attention lavished on her crusty old stepfather, and had looked forward with intense pleasure to the time she hoped to spend on the beautiful borders of Wales with her mother. Therefore it was no slight disappointment to her to have all these arrangements knocked on the head; and it required a considerable effort on her part to be cheerful during the rest of the journey with Claude Trevelyan. However, she accomplished it pretty well. She was kind and gentle in her manner to him, and bore more patiently than was her wont with his off-hand manner and very commonplace observations; nay, she almost felt sorry when the train stopped, and she realized that she must be left alone to embark on a visit to people who were nearly strangers to her.

‘Goodbye, Frances. Don’t be moped to death; and drop us a line one of these days. “The Club” will always find me. I shall be rushing about, shooting

now, and that is the safest direction. Take care of yourself.'

Frances sighed. Was it regret at leaving Claude, or an undefined feeling that this was hardly the way to part with an intended husband?

CHAPTER III.

COSSINGTON.

‘If practice which sets up to do without theory is contemptible, theory without practice is foolhardy, and perfectly useless.’

LEONCE DE LAVERGNE.

THE day is fast closing in, but the western glow has not quite departed ; still the sky is radiant, though the sun has dipped behind the horizon. The distant moorland is already deepening its rich colour in the evening shadows, and the *couleur de la mort*, as it has been happily called, is settling down upon the far-off mountains, where the first sheetings of snow alone stand out white and ghostly.

In front stretches far away a wild park, with handsome elms scattered about in groups, varied with rich cedars and pines. A little lake catches the red reflection from the clouds, and the cattle are standing gathered in knots, near the gates through which they will pass to their night quarters. Such is the view

meeting the eye from the windows of the house at Cossington. The glow slowly fades from the sky, and a lady, who has been gazing at the sunset for some minutes, turns from the window by which she has been standing, and for a moment or two silently watches another inmate of the room, who till now has been writing incessantly. At last the pen stops, and the writer throws himself back in the large leather chair in which he is sitting, and sighs; still the lady did not interrupt his meditation, nor will we, but take advantage of the pause, and the unusual rest the writer is taking, to sketch Sir George Hervey's outward man.

Lady Okehampton had called him an old man, and yet he was but a year or two her senior—we remember the flight of time in others which passes unheeded o'er our own heads,—and she was hardly turned forty years of age. Of Sir George's height you could hardly judge as he lay back in the chair; he was, however, neither tall nor short. The shape of the brow was very remarkable, and such as is not often seen—broad and deep, well massed above the temples, from which the dark-brown hair was pushed carelessly back. The clear bright eyes rested on the fire, and were shaded by the left hand; the straight expressive eyebrows and perfectly aquiline nose continued the promise of firmness the upper part

of the head had already given. Of the mouth it was scarcely possible to speak, covered as it was by an abundant soft brown beard and thick moustache.

In truth, George Hervey's face was one which would attract and rivet attention, one on which life and its cares had not passed without leaving a trace; there was the stamp of a mind which had worked, an intellect which had borne fruit, and in the fruition left its marks; the lines were deepened here and there more than the forty-two years warranted, but they were the time-marks of thought and not of passion.

There was the impress of a thinking, if not a master mind, in the workings of the brow, and in the anxious care-worn expression, which responsibility cannot fail to leave on those who feel their duties, and distrust their own powers. At last he raised his eyes, put his hand out, and smiled as he met his sister's gaze fixed on him with a tender loving look. The shadow passed away in a moment from his face, as he said, 'Well, what is it, my wise woman, that you are fretting about now?'

'I was thinking, George, that you must be worn out with writing; you have been at it ever since luncheon, and it is now half-past five o'clock. Let me ring for lights, however, if you must write,' she exclaimed, as

she saw him again turn to the sheets of paper as though he would resume his occupation.

‘No, Kate, I’ve finished now; finished at least all I can do for to-night’s post. Will you look over that letter to the Secretary, which must go with the report I have drawn up?’

‘Yes, dear, and then I’ll seal and date the letters; besides, we must really put the room straight a little, for our guests will be here soon, and you must let me put all this tidy, George, as you would insist upon writing here instead of in your own room.’

‘Our guests! I had forgotten all about them, I was so busy making out those returns. When are they to come? I don’t think I am fit to receive company, living out of the world as I do. A London fine lady, and a London young lady engaged to a guardsman! What shall we do with them? Eheu! what a state of things for me! How they will laugh at our old-fashioned ways!’

‘For shame, George! Colonel Fortescue’s wife was the gentlest, prettiest little creature I ever saw, and as Lady Okehampton I did not think she had changed much when I saw them in town, and we settled that they should come and spend a long time with us. Poor Frances also, I don’t fancy her home is altogether happy.’

‘No indeed! Fancy spending your life with a man who is under the delusion that the Reform Bill of ’31 was a calamity, that Eldon’s policy is suitable for these days, and that every Radical, if not every Whig, ought to be hung. But really I cannot imagine what we can do with the girl; with the mother, I daresay, you will be able to manage well enough, but the girl, only think of the girl, Kate,’ and Sir George Hervey put on a comical face of despair.

‘Come, George, don’t be foolish,’ said Mrs. Drummond, laughing; ‘I daresay it will do her good, if she is as fond of excitement as you imagine, to see how quietly happy people may be in the country, and find plenty of work too; perhaps she will do *us* good also. I daresay we live too much in a groove ourselves, thinking our own ways perfection. But ring for lights, or they will begin by falling over the threshold, and that would be a bad omen. And then you shall read to me that speech of Gladstone’s last night, till they come.’

‘Yes, dear, I will. Ah! we shall have no pleasant readings for many a day now.’

‘I will not allow you to predetermine that we are going to be so uncomfortable. I do assure you that anything so simple in her tastes as Lady Okehampton I

have seldom seen, and as for Frances, I liked the little I saw of her very much. But here they are, and we can neither discuss them nor read aloud,' said Mrs. Drummond, pushing back the chairs from the fire, as the sound of carriage-wheels fell upon her ear.

Sir George jumped up quickly and opened the door which led from the drawing-room to his peculiar sanctum—his den, as he called it, but which actually was by far the most comfortable room in the house. His sister called after him, 'O no, George, you must not go;' but he turned a deaf ear to her, closed the door softly; then pulling his chair to the writing-table in front of the fire, he proceeded to arrange the heterogeneous mass of papers and pamphlets which lay on it.

While he is occupied in this apparently hopeless task, we will look round the room, which will perhaps give us a fair insight into the character of its occupant. Rooms often betray the habits of mind and thought of those who live in them as nothing else will do, and we know nothing more suggestive than the habitual sitting rooms of various men—ay, and women—of our acquaintance. This room was large, rather low, panelled with wood, wherever the book-shelves did not fill it up. The said book-shelves were all easily accessible to a person of ordinary height, and

this is said to be the criterion of a real reader. The books on them were of all kinds that could interest, and on all topics. They were evidently for use, and no mere library ornaments. You could perceive, as you ran your eye over them, refinement and cultivation of mind in the person who had selected them ; and though all opinions were represented on the shelves, those that looked most read, and those that lay on the various tables, were mainly of a scientific and liberal character. One or two good prints hung on the vacant spaces above the book-cases. A leather chair was turned to the centre of the writing-table, which, through a large bay-window, commanded a cheerful view of a flower-garden facing due south. A bright crimson carpet covered the floor. One table was covered with all the apparatus necessary for the experiments that might be required in agricultural chemistry ; and here, after his long day of work and business was concluded, would Sir George often wile away an hour or two. Such was the room in which George Hervey passed much of his time. He had just seated himself, and was preparing to read, when his sister put in her head, saying, ‘ George dear, will you come in here, or shall we come in to you ? I’m sorry to say that Lady Okehampton has not arrived, having been obliged to go to her husband, who is ailing ; but

she has kindly trusted us with Miss Fortescue. Shall we come in ?'

Before she had finished speaking, Sir George had left his table and was at his sister's side, and followed her into the drawing-room, where, without more introduction, he went up to the young lady, and holding out his hand in a frank, simple manner, that rather surprised Frances, said, 'Welcome to Cossington, my dear Miss Fortescue. I am very sorry not to see Lady Okehampton with you. I hope, though, that Lord Okehampton's illness may prove a slight one, and that she will find her way soon here. I'm afraid you will find it very dull. Won't she, Kate? And I daresay you will think us very much behind the world in London.'

Frances Fortescue laughed quietly, as she said, 'I think that would be a recommendation in my eyes, Sir George. London has very few recommendations to me; besides, it has always been my dream to see Wales and its beauties. I think I saw mountains as I drove up from the station.'

'Very complimentary to our poor hills to call them mountains. I'm afraid the full daylight will deceive you sadly; but we have real mountains and moorland about twenty miles from here—the oldest

mountains in England, according to Sir Roderick Murchison.'

'Come, George, I'm going to take Frances to her room, and cannot allow you to begin about the beauties of Siluria now.' And so saying, Mrs. Drummond led the way up-stairs to a cheerful, bright bedroom, and having kissed Frances once more, said how glad she was to have her with her, and left her to her maid's care, adding, 'Don't trouble to dress much, my dear; we are quite alone.'

CHAPTER IV

MINE HOSTESS.

'Oh, if the selfish knew how much they lost,
What would they not endeavour, not endure,
To imitate as far as in them lay
Him who his wisdom and his power employs
In making others happy !'

ROGERS.

WHEN Frances Fortescue was left by her hostess in her bedroom, she sighed wearily, as, betaking herself to the inevitable toilet, she sank into the low comfortable arm-chair by the fire, and bade her maid brush her hair, which had always the effect of soothing her mind when anything worried her. She took a book from the table, where several new and interesting publications had been placed by Mrs. Drummond's careful hand. The book was very clever, and on one of Frances' favourite topics ; but she could not attend to it, and it dropped on her knee and she gazed into the fire. Of what was she thinking ? She hardly knew. Why did she feel low and out of

spirits? She could not tell. She was reflecting first on her position in that house, and prepared herself for a good deal of ennui, for she thought it would scarcely fail to be dull with two people she hardly knew, and both so much older than she was. What fatality, she thought, had left her to pay this visit alone?—she was now here, and here she must stay; and then her mind wandered to her betrothed, and she wondered whether every girl's youth was as dreary as hers had been; whether she could lead Claude to interest himself in her pursuits; whether he would enter into the schemes she had formed to benefit the tenants, the poor, the children. 'Poor Claude,' she said to herself, 'I wish he would care for all these things a little, instead of the everlasting shooting and hunting,' and again she sighed. But here her reveries were interrupted by the maid, who told her that 'it only wanted five minutes to dinner-time.' Upon which Frances hastily twisted up her soft fair hair, perhaps a little with the feeling that it did not signify how she looked with these two quiet people; then quickly finishing her dressing, she opened the door to meet Mrs. Drummond on the landing, who began—

'I was just coming to fetch you, my dear, fearing you might lose your way in this odd scrambling old

house.' And then she added, as she placed her hand kindly on the young girl's shoulder, and ushered her into the drawing-room, 'And now let me have a good look at you, my dear child, for I hardly saw you in London. You know I feel as if you were a sort of relation of mine. Your dear father was a distant cousin of ours. Ah, you are like him about the forehead and eyes,' she said, as she kissed Frances' broad smooth forehead. 'But you have your mother's mouth and hair.'

Certainly Frances Fortescue was a fair sight to look at as she stood there in the flickering firelight, which shone on her beautiful features, and danced in gleams on the glossy hair.

Of all the many charms Frances possessed, her entire absence of all self-consciousness was perhaps the greatest; beautiful she could not help knowing that she was, but she accepted the fact without further thought, and without attaching any importance to it; her simplicity of manner attracted and won Mrs. Drummond's heart at once.

'Did you know my father well?' she asked; 'I have, alas, not the smallest recollection of him, and always long so to hear what he was like.'

'I did not know much of him, but George did; they were much together as young men at Oxford, and I can

well remember the way in which he grieved at his sad death ; but ask my brother some day, he will tell you. They were much thrown together in their younger days, though your father was considerably older, and their tastes were very dissimilar. And now, dear child, tell me of yourself a little, and of your dear mother,'—but here Sir George's entrance cut short their conversation, and they adjourned to the dining-room.

After the due amount of inquiries as to whether she was tired, and the details as to the cause of her mother's defection, Frances began to feel rather shy, and to reflect with dread upon the series of long dull evenings which she saw before her, with no society save that of Sir George and his quiet sister.

So long as she thought her mother would accompany her, she had not troubled her head much about this visit, but now here she was fixed for a month, she must begin by saying something, and not sit there meditating upon her fate. She did not feel stiff or awkward. No one could feel that in Sir George's company, with his simple manly manner, which at once put at their ease those whom he addressed. She looked across at him, and wondered whether he was bored to death with her society ; and then, summoning up her courage, began to question him about some of the country through which

she had passed on her way down from London, which gradually led to his giving her a little account of some geological phenomenon in the neighbourhood. He did it in a clear and decided way, without one word too many or too few, and so that Frances' interest was much excited. She confessed that she had read a little on the subject, but was terribly in the dark, dreadfully afraid of being thought blue. This led to an animated discussion, in which Mrs. Drummond joined, occasionally putting in a word of comment or query upon the propriety of young ladies studying and picking up all the information they could. Frances laughed, as she said she was ashamed to say how many things she had tried to understand. Sir George talked easily and cheerfully to her, and was amused by the frankness of her manner, so unlike the London young lady for whom he had been prepared.

Mrs. Drummond also was much taken by surprise to see how easily her brother, who generally was abstracted during the intervals of dinner, was engrossed by the conversation of this bright young girl, who, with her face turned to Sir George, listened to every word that fell from him, now and then shaking her head when she found that something he said did not suit her self-evolved theories.

Of Mrs. Drummond we must here give a slight sketch, both of herself and of her history. She was a tall handsome woman, of about forty years of age, with light-brown hair, blue eyes, and a straight-cut nose; the features were all good, and yet they were nothing, and passed almost unnoticed. The ineffable purity and sweetness of expression was the thing that struck every one,—an expression that no one could pass unnoticed, which made every child instinctively her friend, and which was, after all, but the reflection of the intense peace and love that was in her heart. She was everybody's friend, everybody's confidant; young and old would come to her alike, whether to share their childish joys, or to pour out to her warm sympathizing heart the crushing grief that seemed unbearable. Yes, Kate Drummond was as perfect a character as could be found on earth, but through much heavy sorrow had she arrived at her present peace of mind. A girl, she had been the joy of her father's home, and a young woman, the idol of her husband's heart. A bright happy life of usefulness seemed before her when she left her home to follow her husband to India; but the climate never agreed with Charles Drummond, and the zeal with which he followed his profession, and worked on when leave and rest

were vitally essential for restoration to anything like health and strength, proved fatal, and six years after her marriage Kate Drummond was left a widow, with one boy. Bowed down as she was by this heavy loss, but two years had passed, ere her only child, loved with an intensity that only an ardent and widowed heart like hers could feel, was drowned at school. From this blow it was feared she never could rally. Long and passionately did she mourn her darling. Fifteen years had passed over her head, but the void had never been filled. Some part of her widowhood had been spent in London; she had a house there, and had made her happiness consist in that of others. She had worked much amongst the poor, and had with them many friends. This gave her occupation and interest, and by degrees drew her thoughts from herself. It was work, and work of the heart, and that was what she required to rouse her. She met with many and heavy disappointments, and here and there much of deception, still she worked on, and only gave up when a combination of circumstances seemed to show her that she was more wanted elsewhere. Her health threatened to give way, when her brother, Sir George Hervey, entreated her to come to live with him, and take care of his household. So,

though she nominally still kept her house in town, it was but seldom occupied, save when her brother used it as an hotel during his rapid visits to London, when business took him there.

Such was Mrs. Drummond's history. She had been the mainstay and comfort of her brother's home ever since she took up her abode in it. To her he turned, as did every one, for help and counsel. Her time, her mind, all her energies, were alike at his service; and no one knew how much the quiet sister worked till they had been in the house with them for some weeks.

The evening passed more quickly than Frances had expected. Both Sir George and his sister liked music. Their young guest sang like a bird, and whiled away a good bit of the evening. Then he read to them a review which touched upon one of the subjects they had discussed at dinner. This led to further conversation, and when at last Mrs. Drummond said to her, 'My dear child, we are early birds,' she could hardly believe that the much-dreaded evening had passed so quickly.

CHAPTER V.

MINE HOST.

‘ Savoir prendre la vie telle qu’elle est, tout en la rêvant
ce qu’elle n’est pas.’

‘ A knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the time that he firste began
To riden out, he loved chevalrie,
Trouthe and honor, freedom and curteisie.

And evermore he hadde a sovereign pris,
And though that he was worthy he was wise,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vilanie ne sayde
In all his lif, unto no manere wight.
He was a veray parfet gentil knight.’

CHAUCER, *Canterbury Tales*.

WHY Sir George Hervey had passed his fortieth birthday, and remained yet unmarried, was a question that his country neighbours had asked themselves unceasingly, and had puzzled themselves about ever since he was five-and-twenty. Somehow they had arrived at no satisfactory conclusion, and the reasons alleged were various. Of course, a large

number of his acquaintances, especially his female acquaintances, settled that early in life he had had a desperate and unhappy attachment; but as some said it had been to his sister's governess, some to the wife of a great friend, and others to a penniless daughter of a curate, or to an heiress who had refused him, these accounts did not probably contain much more truth than such rumours generally do.

Sir George Hervey had not married because his life had been so fully occupied that marriage as a duty to his family not having been necessary, as a matter of inclination had never been thought of by him; he had never been in love in his whole life.—Is not falling in love often the consequence of idleness and want of employment?—He had left Oxford with high honours and brilliant reputation as a scholar and man of intellect; he had been foremost in all debating-societies, and had made a name for himself at college as one who had entered into all depths of thought, and had fairly reasoned out his own conclusion. When he stepped out into his position in the great world, he had been thrown into the most intellectual political society of the day. He had been bred and born an old-fashioned Whig, and had started with a strong bias in favour of that party in the State. His father and grandfather had

sat successively as the Whig members for the division of the county in which was the old family place. At Oxford, he was mixed up with all the rising questions of interest—scientific, political, and religious. George Hervey, however, was not one to accept the views of others without first examining the pros and cons of each question. When courted, as a young man of large expectations, great abilities, and considerable personal attractions is sure to be courted, he would pledge himself to no party rashly ; and though the London world tried hard to keep him in society, and to draw him into its vortex, and though the then leader of the Whig party designated him as the young man of the year, and one who could most fitly contest his county in the approaching struggle, he declined to put himself forward. He would travel, and form his mind, learning to understand men before he thought of legislating for them. After the lapse of two years he returned to England, an enlightened Liberal, but not a Radical. His father's earnest wishes made him consent to stand for the county. He was returned under the broad definition of Whiggism, but with a clearly expressed determination to be free on all matters to vote as he might think fit. He was no delegate from a narrow-minded constituency, but a man who, having sacrificed

his own wishes to accede to those of his friends, would not, at the same time, sacrifice his right of private judgment. In the House he soon won golden opinions. A deep thinker, a clear, concise speaker, who knew and calculated beforehand the temper of the House, at thirty George Hervey had twice turned the scale for Government on important measures—and why? because he never spoke except on subjects on which he was thoroughly well-informed, and his earnestness and sound good sense then prevailed. Such had been his career. During ten years and more his name had been much before the public. No measure for the good of his fellow-creatures could be proposed, no society for their benefit organized, that George did not give it a place in his life. Again women courted him, and again would fain have pressed the brilliant young orator into their society, but he was proof against all their blandishments. London drawing-rooms suited him not. He had no taste for the amusements they offered, he was heart and soul in public life, too much absorbed by the interests he created for himself to care to mingle much with people where such interests and pursuits were little known, and less cared for. A few friends George Hervey had. Perhaps many would have been astonished at his choice. They were men who had been college friends, who were

working on small means in London, but few of whom were married, and at whose houses he scarcely ever saw any female society. To these friends he would drop in on many of the evenings when the House was not sitting, and talk over old college times, embark, maybe, in a metaphysical discussion, which would have taken most men out of their depths, but to him came as a relaxation, and of the kind he most preferred. With all this power of understanding and versatility of talent, there was in George extreme humility and distrust of himself. He would always put himself in the background, put others forward, and often he might be seen listening patiently, ay, and giving all attention, to men whose abilities were as shadows compared to his. His gentleness and playfulness of manner was perhaps one of his greatest attractions: he was as tender in his manner as a woman. To his relations and to his father he had ever been the sunshine of the house, while he was its support and counsellor in all matters of importance. Many and many an evening had Sir Arthur Hervey sat up in the gallery of the House of Commons to hear his son speak. Although they would often argue half an evening, and Sir Arthur would pretend to ridicule his son's advanced and liberal notions, no one understood him, and no one appreciated him as his father did. At

his house, again, George was thrown in the way of little or no ladies' society. His sister had been his friend, and when she married great had been the blank in his life. With one other female relation only besides his sister was he at all intimate, and this was a cousin, Flora Cavendish by name, who lived some two miles distant from Sir Arthur Hervey's. She was about ten years junior to George. She had always made much of him, and people had said that had he cared to do so, he might have made the fair Flora his wife. But these rumours had never reached his ears. He was always glad to see her, for she listened attentively to him, and affected to understand some of his ideas. She was ever ready to write for him when he used to come down to Cossington, laden with books and pamphlets, and after his sister married she would contrive somehow to be pretty constantly staying there. She became almost necessary to Sir Arthur. George saw the good-natured part of the thing only, and was grateful to her for cheering the old man's solitary life. She used to say 'she was not wanted at home,' 'her father and mother were happier when left to themselves,' and 'her brothers never needed her,' and so she became a sort of habit in George's life. Of *her* feelings we will speak later, and finish now the sketch of our hero's life.

After being a few years in Parliament, at an important moment, when almost all the party coalesced with the extreme Radicals, 'so as to remain in office,' said their opponents, George Hervey remained true to his principles, and at the general election lost his seat. Mortified he may have been, but of that the world knew nothing; he threw himself, heart and soul, into country life, and became the leading man in the county. Reformatories, training-schools, agricultural societies, alike received his fullest attention. He was never a moment idle, and no one was more useful as a working man of business.

About this time his father's failing health gave him much to do on the property, but this did not last long. After a short illness, Sir Arthur died, and the new baronet found that he had more than sufficient duties to fill his time. Household cares began to weigh heavily on him; his cousin Flora in vain suggested her willingness to help him with regard to the management of servants and other domestic matters. But to her surprise he seemed insensible to her overtures. He shut up his house and lived for a few years on an outlying part of the property which required his personal attention, and Flora returned to her own family.

After a while, Sir George found it necessary again to reside on the main estate, and returned to the old Hall, but not before he had succeeded in persuading his sister to come and keep house for him. Since this event, which took place about four years previously to the opening of our story, they had quietly and happily pursued the even tenor of their ways ; and if sometimes a brilliant skirmish in the House of Commons would make Sir George regret for a moment that he was not in his old place, ready to face the old foes, a glance at his sister would bring the peaceful smile back to his face, and he would say, 'What *is* best, dear Kate, is it not ?' And she would stand by him, and laying her soft white hand on his thick brown curls, would answer, 'Yes, George, far best ; and though you are not so much before the world as you were in the old days, remember you are doing good work here ; and besides, dear, you did want rest, mind was wearing out body.' Such had been his life, a life spent for others, as we have said, and in which he had made many friends and no enemies, and had caused all to respect him, however much they might differ from him in opinion.

CHAPTER VI.

AN AFTERNOON AT COSSINGTON.

‘ We wandered to the pine forest
That skirts the ocean’s foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
The smile of Heaven lay.
It seemed as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which scattered from above the sun
A light of Paradise.’

SHELLEY.

‘ **G**EORGE, dear,’ said Mrs. Drummond at breakfast to her brother, a day or two after Frances’ arrival, ‘ what must you do to-day ?’

George Hervey looked up from the *Times*, and said, ‘ Well, I must be at the Board of Guardians at twelve, and at seven some of the tenants are to come up to see me ; but in the rest of the day I’ve not much to do. Why did you ask ?’

Mrs. Drummond hesitated a moment, looked at Frances, and said, 'I was wondering whether we could manage to mount this child; she is used to riding all sorts and kinds of horses; and there is so much beautiful country about here that we cannot get at in the carriage; do you think Frank could try Wildfire with a petticoat? She was by way of carrying a lady when we bought her. I am not sure whether she is quiet, but you would soon see.'

Frances' eyes brightened as Mrs. Drummond spoke, though she was as yet a little too much afraid of Sir George for a ride alone with him to be unmitigated pleasure; still, a ride was always delightful. She looked at her host inquiringly, listening for his answer—

'Well, I don't know what Miss Fortescue would think of Wildfire as a mount. Such a little rough pony is very unlike the sort of horses she is used to; but if she will condescend to accept me as her escort I will speak to the coachman and see what we can do; there is such a lovely view from near Penhadden that I should like you very much to see. Are you up to a longish ride?

'Oh! once on a horse I am never tired,' said Frances in a joyous voice. 'It's very good of you, Sir George, to take care of me, though.'

‘Wait till you get safe home again to thank me, and then we shall see,’ he answered, laughing.

‘But any way, you must not stay dawdling here if you are to have a holiday this afternoon, George. You’ve quantities of business to transact. Come along,’ said his sister.

‘Yes, my dear, I’ll come very soon, but I wanted just to show these specimens to Miss Fortescue.’

‘No, no, George, there really is no time. Why, it’s ten o’clock now.’

Mrs. Drummond’s advice was so clearly right that there was no gainsaying her, and he only added, ‘Very well, perhaps the geology had better wait. Goodbye for the present.’

Frances sat down to write to her mother; and perhaps a clearer insight may be obtained to her condition of mind by looking over her shoulder than by any other process. Her letter ran thus :--

‘DARLING MOTHER,—You will be expecting to hear again from me, even though you are such a bad mother, and have never written to me for a week. Well, I am very comfortable and very happy—facts both of which surprise me extremely. You know the day after I came I wrote to you that I thought it alarming

and rather dull, and that I was quite pleased to find Sir George was going away for a day or two, and that I was rather afraid of him. He did go, and Mrs. Drummond and I got on together capitally. I went with her to schools, clubs, and poor people—in a way that surprised myself. In the evening, though I was quite alone with her, the time went quickly. We read aloud, and she likes my singing to her. In short, she is a great darling. Let me see, it's a long time since you saw her; she is just what I should call a comfortable, satisfying kind of friend, very gentle in her manner, but so firm and decided in her own opinions of right and wrong that I could never imagine her swerving a hair's-breadth when she had made up her mind that a thing ought not to be done. I am very glad I came on here; and now I am actually much less afraid of Sir George; he is wonderfully patient with me, and talks on all sorts of subjects to me most kindly. Somehow or other he seems to have the art of not only finding you the explanation of a thing, but the understanding to take it in. He has a great many interests of many kinds down here—volunteers, etc.,—and is excessively busy and useful, just as I should like my husband to be. Heighho! will Claude ever be of use in his neighbourhood?

‘There are various plans proposed to amuse me—one for riding to-day, which I hope may come to something. At the end of the week, they talk of a day at a cousin’s about twelve miles off, a Mr. Cavendish’s. It is a pretty place, they tell me; but I would rather stay quiet. I have not heard anything of Claude. They expect me to stay till the end of the month. Write me word what I had better do. I hope Lord Okehampton is better. I’m so sorry that you must altogether give up coming here. My love to the boys.—Always, darling mother, your loving child,

FRANCES.’

‘I am becoming quite a politician, I hear the subjects of the day so much discussed. Mrs. Drummond has lent me some nice books. Can you tell her of a good laundry-maid? Mary Fraser is to marry one of Victor’s brother officers, Lord Kelmingham. I forgot to tell you before. Goodbye, dear.’

A few hours later saw Frances cantering in highest spirits, and radiant with health and happiness, by Sir George’s side. He was much amused to find himself, in what he called his old age, turned squire to this young creature, who daily pleased him more and more from her freshness and originality.

He and his sister had talked a good deal over the life

and prospects of their young guest. Both were much interested in her; they could not but pity the loneliness of her life. For lonely it was, though she had nominally plenty of companions—for the want of sympathy in a home, is solitude in the midst of numbers.

There were some little difficulties at first in arranging their route, so that Frances should see as much as possible of the lovely country through which they were passing. But they soon found themselves on a beautiful upland, and riding along the ridge of a range of hills looking down on either side into a rich valley, through which a river found a course, which could be traced by the light catching here and there on the water.

It was a lovely day; the frost had stamped on the bracken that bright golden hue which gives the richest of all foregrounds. Magnificent pine-woods covered the slope of the hill. The sun's rays caught the stems, throwing them into relief, and giving the chequered red and gray, light and shade. Far in the extreme distance could be seen the sea, and sharp eyes could now and then descry the outline of the snow-clad mountains of North Wales. Slowly they rode along the ridge, Sir George now and then pausing to point out the distant objects, and direct his companion's attention to his favourite points in the landscape. He had now been

talking for some minutes of the sketches in the 'Liber Studiorum,' and of Turner's power. Sir George was no artist himself, but he had studied art, as he had everything else. Frances, whose mind had not been much given to drawing, listened attentively, now and then venturing to express an opinion about particular pictures. From Turner they naturally roamed to Ruskin and his ideas of art; from Ruskin's books and theories to wider and more general subjects, and talked pleasantly on. Suddenly Frances looked at Sir George and said, 'I wonder whether you think it presumptuous in me to have the opinions about things, which I cannot help having. I have lived so much alone, that I have been obliged in a measure to think things out for myself. To my stepfather I can never go for any help or advice. He ridicules the idea of women knowing more than how to dress and work and look pretty;—if they can,' she added, laughing.

'My dear child, it is a great pleasure to me if anything I can say will help you; and I am very glad to find you do care about what I call the realities of life. I do not think, perhaps, that some of the works on philosophy, in which you seem to have dabbled a little, will do you much good; but luckily for you, woman's life consists so much more in acting than

thinking, that for thought in the abstract they have but little time.'

'Ah! Sir George, that is what I feared you would say, but thought is a condition of my existence; I get so puzzled and bothered by things that, with any one to guide me, would be simple as A B C. I find it easy to talk to you and to Mrs. Drummond; you make allowance for one's ignorance, and help one on.'

'Ah! my sister; talk to her, she has a most tender loving heart, and is most truly fond of you; she is a far better guide for you than I should be, I am so entirely unversed in the ways of young ladies; and, to tell you the truth, had half expected you to be like the young lady whom you think Lord Okehampton would fain see you. From what we have observed of you, my dear, it seems to me that you want some definite occupation—interests in your daily life; and I hope you will soon have them. I have not the pleasure of Mr. Trevelyan's acquaintance, but I have no doubt that, with your mind, you will have chosen a kindred spirit, and with home duties and the half public ones which belong to one in his sphere of life, you will have plenty, apart from philosophy, to occupy you and fill your life with interest;' and seeing Frances look grave, he added, 'But I did not mean to sadden you, my dear;

—and now I must make you attend to this beautiful country, or we shall be like the “eyes and no eyes” in the child’s story.’

‘My mental eyes are being so widely opened,’ said Frances, ‘that the others do not signify so much. Shall we have a gallop along these beautiful downs?’ she said; and in a moment they were flying over the soft turf, Frances slightly in advance, seemingly part of her horse, her beautiful figure bending and following its every movement. She thoroughly enjoyed it, and after about an hour’s farther ride, they found themselves looking over South Wales, far down the Channel, dotted over with distant sails. Long they lingered on the summit of the hill; till suddenly Sir George, who had dismounted, and was tightening the girth of Frances’ horse, exclaimed, ‘My deputation! I had quite forgotten it; we must go home, I am afraid, and not moralize any more. I shall not forget this ride in a hurry,’ he said, and added, ‘We will have some more rides now that I see how well your horse carries you. You have put £20 on to his value; I could sell it as a perfect lady’s horse;—perhaps, though, its value is dependent on the rider. By the bye, did my sister tell you that the Caven-dishes sent to beg us to go and spend two days there next week: do you mind going?’

Frances readily answered that she was willing to do anything her kind host and hostess liked, and asked a few questions about the Cavendishes, as to the relationship ; then the conversation passed again into the former strain.

Sir George Hervey was alternately pleased with his companion's gracefulness and brightness of manner, and touched by the way in which she seemed trying to solve the problem of life for herself, and to face its difficulties.

She led him unconsciously to tell her of his early life and its disappointments and trials. She drew him out on politics ; and was anxious to hear all she could of the phases of opinion which had ended by making him at last a consistent Liberal. She had never heard any but the most old-fashioned Tory doctrines broached at her stepfather's ; Lord Okehampton being a man who, if he could help it, would not invite inside his door any one who held other opinions.

Frances listened intently as Sir George explained to her his favourite theory of an educational franchise ; and he was surprised at the shrewd clever way in which she met the difficulties of the case, and seemed to have read and considered the subject in a way not general with young ladies. So the time passed, and with the exception of occasional comments on the prospect before

them, they talked of politics all the time, till, as they rode up to the door, and Sir George lifted Frances from her horse, he laughed, and said, 'If Lord Okehampton could guess how dreadfully I have been corrupting your opinions, I think he would send and fetch you away directly.'

'Oh dear, no!' she answered, with a half smile and half sigh; 'he's too glad to be rid of me at any price, I think.'

'Come, come, I'm not going to allow you to say such things.'

'Hollo! Kate, did you think we were lost, dear?' said her brother, as Mrs. Drummond greeted them with a bright smile, saying, 'I'm sure you must be tired, Frances. Shall I put off the dinner, my dear, for half-an-hour, and then you can lie down a bit?'

'O no, Mrs. Drummond; please do not think of such a thing. I am used to being half the day in the saddle at home with my brothers. We have had a delightful ride,' she added, 'and I am very grateful to Sir George for so much trouble. I shall be ready before he has despatched the deputation.'

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER AND SON.

‘How sometimes nature will betray its folly,
Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime
To harder bosoms ! looking on the lines
Of my boy’s face, methought I did recoil
Twenty-three years.’

A Winter’s Tale.

FROM Frances Fortescue and her present residence we must turn to her betrothed, Claude Trevelyan, whom we find, a few days later, pacing an empty room at the Guards’ Club, and fretting and fuming at the non-arrival of his father, and at his consequent detention indoors on a bright frosty day.

‘Half-past one. Upon my soul, it’s too bad of the governor!’ he exclaimed, as for the twentieth time he walked to the window, and looked up and down Pall Mall, and tried in vain to see round the corner of St. James Street.

Now waiting was not at all to Claude’s taste, who

from his childhood upwards had been humoured and spoilt by his father, and from his infancy had been the only person considered in the house, so entirely had Sir Victor Trevelyan been devoted to his boy. An only son, Claude had been early in life allowed to consider his own convenience above everything. He was not by nature an ill-disposed lad; and when left to his own devices, and not biassed by his father's worldly advice and maxims, would often lazily do good-natured things which cost him little or no trouble. He was generous, after his kind, having an allowance which exceeded his wants, and not being a man of extravagant habits; he was, in short, what his brother officers called a very 'good fellow,'—a saying which implies about as much as calling a horse a 'useful sort of animal.' He was dark, with a profusion of curly black hair, and with a width of shoulder and depth of chest that showed him to be fitted for the manly exercises in which he rejoiced. He was well known at Lord's cricket-ground, equally at home at Prince's racket-courts, and at Angelo's. Muscularity was his weakness, or rather his strength. His education, as far as accomplishments or acquirements went, had not gone much beyond what he had been compelled to learn at school; and often had Frances Fortescue's questions or remarks upon topics

of the day left him with a strong idea she knew too much for a woman, and that 'he should have to put a stopper upon all that reading and stuff.' As for Frances Fortescue and his relations with her, he could at times hardly understand his engagement any more than she did herself, though from long use he had come to look upon it as a necessary state of things.

Enough has been said of Sir Victor to give a clue to his selfish, hard, and scheming character. At the moment when our story opens, he was in very embarrassed circumstances, for, though he had a large rent-roll in Somersetshire, and some valuable Yorkshire property, his estates were so deeply mortgaged that at times he had had the greatest struggle to keep up outward appearances, and scarcely could he manage to make both ends meet. An expensive place to keep up, a fine park, and a very large house; his shooting and hunting led to heavy expenses. The allowance he made to his son was far greater than he could well afford, yet he had never hinted to him that there was any want of funds. He had avoided treating him as a grown man; and, strangely enough, perhaps Claude was the only one in the country who did not know how the property was encumbered. This embarrassment, as we have said before, had gone on increasing

for many years, and it was when first Sir Victor realized the extent of his difficulties that the scheme for bringing Frances Fortescue's fortune to fill the gap came into his head, and the idea once there, it was never abandoned, and never lost sight of. Now Sir Victor, though he did not personally much like Frances, was ardently wishing for the marriage to take place, rather than let the mortgagees foreclose, as his agent informed him they certainly would do. Sir Victor's weakest point was his complete trust in this agent, who was, though the baronet little knew it, the principal in the mortgages on the property—a man of whom we shall hear more ere long.

But enough of description, the characters of the two men will portray themselves best by watching their actions and listening to their conversation.

For about a quarter of an hour longer Claude paced up and down the room in a state of great discontent, consulting his watch every two or three minutes,—taking up *Bell's Life* and reading a few lines and then throwing down the paper again. Fortunately he was the only occupant of the room, so he disturbed no one. At last he heard a Hansom drive up, and the bang of its doors being thrown violently open, as by a person in a tremendous hurry. Before, however, the occupant of

the cab had time to ask whether Mr. Trevelyan was in the Club, Claude was standing by his father's side.

'Father, I thought you never were coming. Come along, we shall be awfully late.' And hardly leaving the elder man time to pay his fare, he linked his arm through his father's and walked towards St. James Street.

'Well, my boy, where are we going?' said Sir Victor. 'You know it really was not my fault I was late. The train was behind time, and then I had to stop at Drummond's on my way, to get some money. Do you know, my lad, I have been wanting to talk to you for some days, about what is business and pleasure combined—that is, your fair *fiancée*.'

'Oh, bother!' was Claude Trevelyan's impatient answer. 'I really can't attend to that now. By George! there's Clarence's drag at White's. I promised we would go down with him to shoot a few pigeons at Hornsey. We have kept them waiting. I'll listen to anything you want to say after dinner, father; and you'll dine with me to-night, won't you? These fellows wanted me to dine with them, but I thought we would have a cosy evening, and settle plans—eh!'

'All right, my boy,' sighed Sir Victor, thinking with dread of the clean breast which he had determined to make of it to his son, and of the money which somehow

or other must be forthcoming before many months elapsed, bills which must be renewed or taken up, and similarly cheerful subjects of contemplation. However, he had to continue his meditations as best he could on the drag, which one of Claude's brother officers was undertaking to drive. It must be confessed that his reflections were often interrupted by the fact that repeatedly his life was placed in imminent jeopardy by the rash carelessness of their Jehu, whose faintest attempts at conversation were invariably followed by strange vagaries on the part of the horses, and nearer proximity to the pavement than was quite agreeable. However, they got to Hornsey Wood and back safely; and beyond the fact that Claude came back the loser of some thirty pounds, with which he had backed his luck, nothing of any moment had occurred.

Ten o'clock in the evening saw Sir Victor and his son sitting over the fire in Claude's luxurious lodgings, where they adjourned after dinner,—the room half filled with tobacco smoke, and spirits and water on the table. The father had been trying all through the evening to nerve himself to his unpleasant subject. At last his son gave him an opening, for having puffed a cloud of smoke slowly into the air, he said, as he filled his glass in a lazy way—

‘I say, father, I can’t make up my mind where to finish the hunting season. I’ve half a mind to give the old country a turn and spend a month or two with you; but then the Cliffords want me to go shares in a box at Melton with them. That would be jolly enough, but it requires such a confounded lot of money; and what with one thing and another, I’m fairly cleaned out. You could not help me with a few hundreds, could you? and then I could do the thing well for once in my life. Frank Clifford knows of a couple of splendid timber-jumpers that his cousin Tremaine wants to sell. If you will help me, I think I should like that best. You see there’s no good in a fellow going down there without five or six horses—he’s nowhere. What do you say to this?’ And Claude turned his head over his shoulder, looking to his father.

The baronet felt that now or never he must speak, so, after carefully knocking off the ashes of his cigar with his little finger, clearing his throat, and looking straight into the fire, he began—

‘My dear boy, I really think that it is Frances Fortescue you should consult on these matters. Surely this engagement has lasted a long time. Why delay the marriage any longer? You’ve had several years of liberty, Claude, and I do think it most desirable; and

besides, I must honestly tell you, that even did you not marry this winter, I really do not think I can find you the money you speak of. I would if I could, upon my soul, but I really do not know where to turn for it. My expenses have been very heavy. The last election bills were very large, and I had to borrow money to pay them. That money, and other money, is still to be paid; and I really feel as if I could not raise more on the property at present.'

'Raise money, my dear father!' said Claude, who was now sitting upright in his chair, with a much puzzled expression on his round good-natured face. 'I don't a bit understand all this. I thought you had quantities and quantities of money. What on earth has become of it all? The fellows in the regiment always talk as if you were made of money. Never mind about the hunters. I daresay I can manage with what I've got down at Castle Grange. But I don't want to marry just yet, father, and I'm sure Frances don't care. She's down in Devonshire, I think; and Lord Okehampton is ill, or something. I went with her in the train the other day, when I went down for that shooting near Exeter.'

'Claude, listen to me,' said the father. 'This is a matter to which you must give your fullest attention.

It concerns you more than it does me. Money we must raise somehow. I have bills to take up and the interest of mortgages to meet, or we shall be in a devil of a mess. Think what that last contested election cost me. Catch me being fool enough to stand again !'

'Why, father, what has Grimshaw been about all this time ; it seems to me he can't have managed as he ought, to get us into a mess like this ?'

'Grimshaw is an honest fellow as ever breathed, and has contrived to get me money several times on most advantageous terms ; the mortgagees talk of foreclosing (I don't quite know who they are), but Grimshaw says it can't be helped.'

'Grimshaw be hanged ! Father, I do hate that fellow, and I expect he hates me too, ever since I thrashed his boy for being the most infernal liar and cheat that ever lived.'

'Come, Claude, don't talk such nonsense. Leave Grimshaw alone. I should like to know where we should be without him ? But to go back to your matters : if you can get Frances Fortescue to marry you by the beginning of the year, we shall all be out of this hole. She has her property in her own hands, and has sixty thousand down in hard money. If I could get rid of this drag-weight, I should improve the property, and repay her again and again.'

‘Whew!’ said Claude, shaking his head, ‘and she and I are to be the victims—eh! I really think it’s very hard lines upon us.’

‘My dear boy, you are unreasonable; how can I help it? I am sure that I would do anything on earth to help you, if I could; but upon my soul I don’t know where to turn for £100 sometimes.’

‘Well, father, what is it you want me to do about the matter? I suppose, some day or other, I shall have to marry,’ said Claude sullenly. ‘If I am to be sacrificed, I am, and Frances and I may as well marry in three months as in a year. She is going to stay where she is for the present, and I fancy has no more idea of marrying me soon, than I had ten minutes ago of marrying her at present.’

‘Then she must be made aware of the idea,’ said Sir Victor sharply. ‘Confound the girl, she ought to be glad enough.’

‘Stop a bit, father, I won’t have Frances spoken of like that; the fact is, I am not half worthy of her, and I feel a blackguard for marrying her, as though it were more for money than for love, in this way.’

‘Pooh, Claude, I won’t have you think any such stuff. Depend upon it you will be as happy as possible; it’s all gammon expecting to be desperately in love, and such nonsense is only fit for schoolboys. Now, my

advice to you would be to write to Frances and say that I hope very much that they will not pass the Court without giving me a few days of their company, as I expect some friends; then I'll write to her mother and tell her she must come. Once with us, why, it will be your fault if matters do not proceed according to our plans, and I'll tell Grimshaw—'

'I wish Grimshaw had been anywhere before you ever saw him, father. Mark you, I'm no judge of men, I know nothing of the world as you do, but I would trust him just as far as I could see him, and no further. Well, I suppose I must do this, though it's uncommonly against the grain, I can tell you. Poor Frances, she's a good girl, worth a better man than I am;' and Claude got up, lit a fresh cigar, saying to his father as he left the room, 'I'm going to Pratt's for an hour or so, just to hear how things are going about the Liverpool meeting. Are you coming? Tired,—ah! very well. Good-night, father.'

And tired though he was, Sir Victor sat an hour or more looking into the dying fire, and meditating upon the various schemes with which his head was lined; but as such schemes throw but little light on our story, we will here leave him.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL LIFE.

‘ Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep, wide sea of misery,
Or the mariner worn and wan
Never thus could voyage on,
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his weary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel’s track.’

SHELLEY.

THE time at Cossington passed quietly and peacefully ; day succeeded day, each bringing its home duties and home pleasures. It was the sort of existence which we may all of us have known at some time or other ; to which we may now, in our busy lives, filled with public duties,—or in our lonely lives, away from all friends and from all society, as the case may be,—look back with infinite satisfaction, as an oasis in the wide plain of memory, where we were quietly, simply happy, where passions and excitement

were alike banished from our life, where all was simple rest. Who would not go back to that time of peace? The thirst for rest haunts us all in later days, and we long for the quiet that can never return again, when we have duties, responsibilities, and occupation, from which we cannot free ourselves; and, if we could, perhaps would find this very peacefulness for which we pine mere dulness! No, the past had better remain as a kind of pleasant dream; if it came again, it would probably only bring disappointment.

Frances lived and enjoyed her daily life as she had never enjoyed anything before. To her the days were passed and gone ere they seemed begun; yet there was not much that could be called pleasure,—an hour or two of quiet reading while Mrs. Drummond was attending to household duties, a little music, a walk to the schools, or to the cottage of a poor neighbour, now and then a ride with Sir George, more often a drive with Mrs. Drummond, a quiet party, occasionally a stray guest—the clergyman of the parish kept to dinner, or a neighbour with whom some county business must be discussed,—otherwise the evening was spent in reading aloud and quiet talk. Nothing can sound duller or more prosaic, yet nothing could Frances have found so pleasant. What then was the charm,

the growing daily charm, of the Cossington life? Did they spoil her? She could safely answer, No. There was much of careful advice given to her by Mrs. Drummond, to whom Frances had gradually and insensibly given a large share of her heart,—for who would not have given their heart to one so entirely sympathetic? Mrs. Drummond talked of herself as old, but she was one who, as all of all ages who were thrown with her felt, at once entered fully into their trials and interests. Frances felt the charm, and succumbed to it as others had done before her. She had not at once given her confidence, but she had found great satisfaction at first in listening to Mrs. Drummond's kind gentle voice and tender words in speaking of others, then, by degrees, little shadows of her own thoughts had crept out; but it was not easy to her to speak of her own feelings. We have spoken of Frances' lonely life; she had never had a friend, never had a sister, and year by year had seen her more and more self-concentrated, and shut up with her own thoughts; therefore it was with difficulty she was led to speak of herself at all. Mrs. Drummond saw all this, and did not seek any confidence. She would let matters take their time; but every day did its work. At night the girl would sit long over her fire, wondering whence came

this happiness, so new and so delightful. What was it she was learning at Cossington? That life was work for others, and that as such, and such only, it brought happiness. Sir George's manner was older than his years, and he had a pleasure in teaching this 'child,' as he always called her to his sister; maybe the word was an unwise one for him to have got into the habit of using,—it masked still further a danger, of which neither he or his pupil ever thought.

But be the cause what it might, it was a pleasure to Frances when, one day, a walk having been planned to a neighbouring village, she heard Mrs. Drummond call her, and say, 'Frances, I have some unexpected letters to answer, and you will have to accept George as your escort.'

It was a damp gloomy day; there was a fog which you might have cut with a knife; from every tree of the leafless avenues under which they walked the condensed mist fell in heavy drops; it was a dead, still air, —every drop that fell to the ground from the bare trees fell with a separate and distinct sound. It was as uninviting a day as could have been found. Moreover, the roads outside the park-gates were a deep mass of mud, and the chilliness struck into the very bones; yet never on the brightest May morning, with all nature

in its gayest garb, had Frances more enjoyed a walk. Neither was it the subject of conversation that had been specially attractive,—that of the first half of their walk had been on the various schools of Greek philosophy ; and on the return home, when a visit to a dying child had changed the course of ideas, it had been on the condition of the labouring classes, and all the difficulties they had to contend with. Sir George's heart and soul was in the latter subject : and he talked as a man talks who has both theory and experience at his fingers' end. Thus it was that day by day Frances' mind was opened, and she revelled in the advantages she was enjoying.

We have said that this girl was not, and had never pretended she could be, devotedly attached to the cousin who was so soon to be her husband. She had always said she could only give affection, and not deep love. Her mother had said that was more than enough. Claude and Sir Victor were content. She knew nothing of love, and had given her consent to insure peace to herself and to give comfort to her mother. Was she not, poor girl, while trying to learn the realities of life at Cossington, actually widening the breach between Claude and herself ? If so, it was done unintentionally and unconsciously.

So passed about a fortnight, during which nothing occurred to disturb the daily routine of the life at Sir George Hervey's. The visit to the Cavendishes was delayed from various causes, but was to take place at the end of the month.

CHAPTER IX.

MESHES IN THE WEB.

‘To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,—
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I’ll be revenged.’

Hamlet.

‘**A**H, another letter from Sir Victor—from my master!—my master, my patron, to his humble servant, John Grimshaw?—to tell me what he wants of me now.’ So said to himself, half aloud, the only occupant of the room in which we find him—a sort of office or steward’s room in a remote corner of one of the handsomest Elizabethan houses in England—a house bestowed by the virgin Queen, in a moment of gratitude, upon the ancestor of its present owner, Sir Victor Trevelyan. In dimensions, it was truly a royal residence, but it wanted almost a royal purse to keep it in repair and live in it. Broad acres had been bestowed with the house; but alas! though beautiful beyond

words as scenery—rich fir woods, broken ground, morass and lake, furze and heather, making a splendid picture to gaze on from the old terraces,—they brought but little money to keep up the palace—for palace it was,—with its deep mullioned windows, long galleries, vaulted oak halls, and staircases. No, money had been scarce for many generations with the Trevelyan. Here and there a member of the family had married for money, and brought some grist to the mill, but generally the expenditure had been instantly increased; and before the life of the heiress was ended, another mortgage had been added to the encumbrances bequeathed by former generations. Sir Victor's career had been no exception to the general rule. He too had married an heiress—a city lady—whom he never pretended to love. Two years only fate had linked her to her ungenial selfish husband. She was a quiet gentle woman, who somehow never could realize she was a great lady, cleaving in spirit to her own relations, living in awe of Sir Victor, and dying of a weary heart and a purposeless life a year after her baby was born. She regretted nothing on earth but leaving this baby. Those who were fondest of her, seeing what her life was, said 'It was better for her to die. Sir Victor was no meet husband for this gentle unselfish woman.' Such and

many similar comments were made; and, after a year or so, people would have forgotten that Sir Victor had ever been a married man, had it not been for the little Claude, who was alternately bullied and petted by his capricious, selfish father. By degrees the bullying became less. Sir Victor began to be proud of the child, humoured him, and encouraged his precocity; sent him to school; but when he came home for the holidays would let the boy run riot in the place, and spoilt him to excess. Fortunately there was a shade of his mother's nature in Claude's heart, and he grew up less unamiable than might have been expected. He was selfish, because he had never from childhood been taught to consider aught but his own amusement; but he was good-tempered, and honourable in his ideas; he had the keenest sense of what was not straightforward, and anything sneaking or mean would rouse his ire, and generally bring punishment on the offender; still it was but the world's code of honour, not founded on any real sense of right and wrong—an honour which probably would give way before the first real temptation. Sir Victor, following the lead of his ancestors, had ever been extravagant; his wife's money had soon disappeared in the expensive hunting establishment that he maintained; and two contested elections, both

of which he lost, had swelled the debt considerably. Then had been the moment when the agent Grimshaw had laid the first train of the scheme he cherished as the apple of his eye, a scheme formed of cupidity and revenge combined. Early in life had Sir Victor's sneers and contempt for the man of business grated on Grimshaw's ear and spirits. He had been powerless to resent it then ; for the estate was in its best days—the first after Lady Trevelyan's marriage. The agent had an only son, whom, like Sir Victor, he idolized. Claude and the young Grimshaw were allowed to play together as children, and might have continued to grow up as companions, save that when Claude was about twelve years old he found out his playfellow in a transaction which was a combination of lying and stealing. This to the high-spirited boy was an unpardonable offence. He undertook a piece of 'red-handed justice,' and inflicted on Master Grimshaw a sample of 'punishment' which sent him direct to his father for consolation. From that moment the elder Grimshaw took his determination. He said nothing; and Claude, who had expected a complaint to be carried to his father, was surprised to be cordially greeted by the parent of his victim; but never from that moment was revenge out of Grimshaw's

head. Unknowingly Sir Victor spread nets for himself—unwittingly came for help to the very man he should have avoided in his hour of need.

‘Grimshaw is the best fellow in the world about money,’ he would say, ‘he can always help one—always pull one through.’ So money after money was advanced, mortgage after mortgage was accumulated,—Sir Victor little thinking that the apparently penniless Grimshaw was the principal in these transactions. There was always a plausible tale of moneys belonging to other clients; and though Sir Victor schemed and plotted himself, somehow it never occurred to him that another could do the same.

Thus had matters gone on for years. The web had been slowly weaving. The fly was daily more and more entangled in its invisible meshes. Latterly Grimshaw had made a pretence of slight difficulties in finding the money for his patron, lest the devices should become too transparent, and the mask fall off before its time. The entail of the bulk of such property as was in settlement had been cut off when Claude came of age, and a few outlying farms sold. This was again the schemer’s doing. He had at that time persuaded Sir Victor that it would be difficult to manage otherwise to get some money that must be forthcoming, when the truth was

it could have been produced at any moment. His object was to give his victim the full power over the entire property. A month or so more, and Grimshaw meant to declare himself. He knew of the engagement existing between Claude and Miss Fortescue, he had been at the pains to ascertain the state in which matters lay between them, and had half concluded, from what he heard, that if it could be delayed sufficiently long, and the state of Sir Victor's affairs made known, the marriage would not take place at all. The very morning on which we find him he had just returned from a stroll round the park, and had stood long on the door-steps overlooking the rich scene before him, picturing himself as master there, where he was now a servant. Beautiful the scene was—lovely enough to have melted any heart but one so seared and hardened as that of John Grimshaw. The evening sun-light fell in long slanting rays across the distant woodland; the last and richest shade of colouring was on the oaks, which still held their leaves. The soil, as we have said, was very poor, but the scenic beauty was not affected by that circumstance. In varied outline the hills rose and fell below the eye. A large distant piece of water reflected the glowing sky and the black shadows of the old Scotch firs.

Hérons skimmed the water, and rested here and there feeding; a distant murmur of a trout-stream caught the ear; and the lowing of the cattle, as they neared the home-farm, was borne on the wind to Grimshaw, as he stood there, gazing on the scene before him, and watching the postman as he came up the old fir avenue which led to the house.

‘Mine—all actually mine, though not as yet legally,’ he exclaimed; and the man’s face lighted with an evil smile.

The postman came nearer, and some half-dozen letters were put into Mr. Grimshaw’s hand, who glanced at them and put them in his pocket, sauntered slowly into the house, and sat down in the cosy room he was privileged to call his own.

Now there was just one other person in the world whom Mr. Grimshaw honoured by a hatred as deep as that which he cherished against the Trevelyan family, and that person was a lady of whom we shall see and hear much more in the course of this history. It was Miss Flora Cavendish. Why did he hate her? For just the same reason that he hated Sir Victor and his son. Flora Cavendish was a peerlessly beautiful woman — a very queen amongst her sex,—but swayed by a fatal love of admiration, and a determination that all

men brought into contact with her should worship at her throne ; perhaps the most dangerous fancy a woman can have. Any way, when in her early years *business* had brought the agent to her father's house, she had contrived to interest herself in schedules, leases, and deeds, till the wretched Grimshaw, blinded by the siren and her charms, in a weak moment spoke to her of love. Then it was that the lady stung him to the quick. Had the meanest hireling in her brother's stables thus addressed her, not less withering would have been the scorn, the utter contempt, with which she answered him. She spared him not ; and again and again the lash of her irony fell on the victim's shoulders. John Grimshaw was stunned by the blow, and by her indignation. He turned, however, like a worm ; and from that hour to this in which we see him, he had hated her with a deadly hate that was yet stronger than his love had been. To Flora Cavendish he had been one of many victims slain ; and though, perhaps, she never actually forgot the insult, as she called it, she thought he was a useful sort of man to her brother, she said nothing about it, and he stayed on, the agent to the Cavendish property. Every year saw him a guest at Mr. Cavendish's house ; and never did the agent fail to search for a weak point in which to wound his old flame.

He had waited a long time in vain; there was apparently no tender spot in the heart of this proud scornful gentlewoman. Living as he did in another county, somehow the rumour of Miss Cavendish's partiality for her cousin Sir George Hervey had never reached his ears. Besides which, the report had well-nigh died out as years passed on, and Sir George remained a bachelor. His hate grew but more deadly, and with it his conviction that the weakness must be there, could he but find it.

Thus much have we digressed, that the character of the man might a little be understood; and yet, black as we have drawn John Grimshaw, there were some few good qualities about the man. Human nature is but seldom really without some redeeming points, and it is a false representation of humanity that classes men into angels and devils.

In this especial case Grimshaw's virtues consisted in the tenderness with which he had borne with the illness of an ailing fretful wife, and the affection he felt for his son, a worthless young fellow, who had but little to recommend him. To this, however, as it in nowise concerns us, we will not further allude, but return to the letters which Grimshaw held unopened in his hand, till he found himself sitting in his own sanctum in the house. Even when there he

did not immediately open them, but sat himself down, and kicked one of the huge logs which were smouldering and flickering in the large open grate; then he turned to the letters, looked at them one after the other—his eye glittered maliciously as he beheld the crest and writing of Mr. Cavendish,—and when he came to Sir Victor's letter, he gave utterance to the remark about *his master* which we have already heard.

CHAPTER X.

FOILED.

'A knave very voluble ; no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming.'

Othello.

SLOWLY and deliberately did John Grimshaw open his letters. That with the Cavendish crest was but the yearly invitation he received to come to Crookham Court and shoot pheasants. Yes, he would go,—he must, in fact. This was a case of business as well as pleasure. Last came Sir Victor's, and it was opened in as business-like a manner as the rest. But what caused the reader, as he perused it, to start, turn deadly white, then gnash his teeth and clench his fists, and hiss out a curse from between his pale lips? Surely there was not much in such a letter to alarm a man of business! But the letter fell on the floor, and John Grimshaw's head dropped on his folded arms on the table. Shall we read the letter? It ran as follows :—

‘ARTHUR’S CLUB, ST. JAMES STREET.

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I expect to return home on Saturday fortnight, and in the course of a month or so to have a large party of friends staying with me. You will oblige me by telling my housekeeper of this. I shall be glad to settle and look over the year’s accounts with you, and I hope we shall be able in the early spring to pay off many of the most pressing claims on the estate. Mr. Trevelyan, I believe, will so arrange his marriage settlements that he will receive a large sum of ready money for this purpose, to be charged on the property.—Yours faithfully,

‘V. TREVELYAN.’

This was the letter that had so disturbed the spirit of John Grimshaw, and that made him groan aloud as he raised his head, saying, ‘And have I toiled thus half my life for nothing? Is the revenge I have so longed for to escape thus? And yet what help is there?—what can I do? Just at the time when all seemed slipping into my net, to be foiled by the thousands of this Fortescue girl!’ Thus he meditated long and bitterly. The blow was unexpected and severe. The agent had been so sure that all the schemes he had so carefully woven would succeed,

he had laid his toils cautiously during such a length of time, had gloated in imagination over his triumph, had rehearsed the scene of his patron's humiliation, and had it come to this—that rank and money should again prevail over him, and he remain but as he was? Never! he swore, as he ground his teeth. He would move heaven and earth, but this aid should not come to the Trevelyans. But how prevent it? In vain he racked his brain; in vain he turned again to Sir Victor's letter to see if he could have read aright. Yes; it was all there. The money would be forthcoming and the property cleared when the marriage took place. It all turned on that. What and if that marriage never took place at all! Grimshaw would then be in his old position. But what chance that it should not? All sides were favourable to the alliance. It was nothing new. The young people knew each other thoroughly, and it had long been settled. No; there was no chance. Truly this was of all the bitterest hour in John Grimshaw's life.

CHAPTER XI.

'CARTE DU PAYS.'

'The bountiful blind woman doth most mistake in her gifts to women. For those that she makes fair, she scarce makes honest; and those that she makes honest, she makes very ill favouredly.'

As You Like It.

THE end of the month had come, all too soon, for Frances Fortescue, who, when we meet her, is sitting at Mrs. Drummond's feet in her dressing-room. The dreaded visit had come, and they were at Mr. Cavendish's house. She was spending the time that elapsed between their being shown to their rooms and dressing-time, in trying to get from Mrs. Drummond an account of the people staying in the house, who they were, and how related to each other.

'You know, dear, they are all strangers to me, and you really must tell me a little about them all. In the first place, which was the lady of the house?'

'She was not down-stairs, dear child,' answered Mrs. Drummond, stroking the fair head as she spoke.

'Did you not hear Henry Cavendish apologize for her, and say she had a dreadful headache, but would be down at dinner? As to the others, why, there was Lady Osmond Willoughby and her daughters. Lady Osmond is very original, and you will not be long in the house without finding that out. She is under the delusion that the eyes of all the world are concentrated on her movements, and that what she does is quite peculiar to her; that she is more nervous, more sensitive, more overwhelmed with business, has less appetite, and generally more finely organized feelings, than any human being ever had before. She is a well-to-do widow, and her two daughters are dependent on her. One is as lively a merry little flirt as I ever came across, and the other is her mother's *bête noir*, as awkward as the first is graceful and attractive, always saying and doing the wrong thing. Dear me, it sounds very ill-natured to say so, but I always feel my spirits sink when I see that girl and her mother, and one meets them constantly about here. Then there is Lord Donnington and his wife. They are genuine, true people. He is a special friend of George's. They take the same line in politics. He is a very leading man in these parts, and much interested in all the questions for the improvement of agriculture.

People think her stiff and dry, but I do not, now that I know her. Let me see, who else is there? There is Colonel Montague, who is in some dragoon regiment; little Paul Campbell, in the Foreign Office; and Lord Harlech, who is a guardsman, I think,—that very tall man you may have seen who sauntered into the room and helped himself to tea, took a lamp, the paper, and the most comfortable arm-chair the moment he entered it. Then there was Mr. Grimshaw, the agent, a man whom neither George nor I can like, but who seems to manage the property well.'

'O yes, I have heard much of him. He is Sir Victor's man of business, and he trusts him, I think, more than Claude likes. But is there no one else?' asked Frances.

'Oh, I forgot the old Duchess of Arlington, who is the most extraordinary woman I ever met in my life, the queerest mixture of grandeur and homeliness I ever came across. There, dear, I think that's enough. But you know some of these people, I should think?'

'Only Miss Helen Willoughby, and I met her without her mother, and thought her lively, very childish, and rather fast. But, dear Mrs. Drummond, will you tell me what Miss Cavendish is like? I know she is a very old friend of yours and Sir George's.'

'She is a cousin of ours, and I think you must not

ask me for my opinion of Flora. She is undoubtedly very handsome—singularly so. She is generally considered very attractive; but let me give you a word of advice: don't be taken too much by her very forthcoming manner. I do not know that she means to be insincere; but it is hardly possible she can feel all she says. She is a capital mistress for this house, and manages everything very well for her brother, who is quiet and rather indolent. Now, child, you really must let me dress; we old people, you know, require more getting up than you young ones.'

Frances laughed outright at this speech; and well she might, for anything less like 'getting up' than the rich plain grey silk and old lace cap which was prepared for Mrs. Drummond to wear, could not be seen.

'You, dear! Why, I'm sure you are always dressed quicker than any of us, and have margins for poor people, sick servants, and Sir George's affairs into the bargain. Well, goodbye. I had many more things to ask, but they must wait. Dear me, how pleasant and peaceful it is being with you, and how shall I ever bear my lonely life again?' she sighed as she turned to the door.

'Never fear, Frances; you will find plenty of work to your hand in your home, if you seek for it; perhaps

all the better for you that it may not be exactly the work you would have chosen for yourself.'

'Ah, that is what Sir George said during our last ride,' said Frances. 'Yes, and I suppose it is true; but it would be easier to work with you to teach me.'

'Some people have to learn to run alone early in life, and some late, my child. Better to learn the hard lesson while you are young. You really must go; this is a punctual house. Mr. Cavendish is a regular old bachelor in many of his ways.'

CHAPTER XII.

FRESH ACQUAINTANCE.

'Seems he a dove? his feathers are but borrowed,
For he's dispos'd as the hateful raven.
Is he a lamb? his skin is surely lent him.
Who cannot steal a shape that means deceit?'

Henry VI.

IN half an hour Frances followed Mrs. Drummond down the broad stone staircase, and across a large low hall and music-room into a sort of gallery, where the guests assembled for dinner. Some half dozen were already gathered round the fireplace; but she had no time to observe them, for the moment they entered a lady swept quickly across the room, and with hands extended kissed Mrs. Drummond on both cheeks, saying in the richest and softest of voices, 'My dearest Kate, this is too kind of you coming on such short notice, and bringing me such a charming addition to our little party. My dear Miss Fortescue, I am so glad to see you; it reminds me of "auld lang syne."' I knew your dear mother very well. You

must forgive us if we are very dull, and only let me think of the pleasure of having you here.'

So spake a woman who might perhaps have seen five-and-thirty summers, but on whose face time had sat lightly. She was very tall, of a grand Roman cast of feature, broad low forehead, crowned with masses of black hair coiled round her small head; a full well-shaped bust, and magnificent hands and arms, all tended to carry out the Roman type: her mouth was the only feature a sculptor might have criticised,—with determination written in every line of the expression of her tight-drawn lips. Her eyes were the peculiar feature of her face,—they seemed lighted from within, glowing with a strange fire, and leaving you ever in doubt as to what was their colour,—seldom did they meet your gaze, but were ever restlessly wandering from object to object while she was talking to you. Her movements were supple and serpent-like; the folds of her velvet gown swept and waved behind her, as she moved with the perfection of grace. Such was the majestic woman who greeted Frances in the demonstrative way we have stated, which, however, friendly and affectionate though it seemed, left on her an impression of insincerity, from being more than the occasion called for; and from which she therefore instinctively shrank, though she

responded quietly and cordially. However, she had but little time for inward comments. Mrs. Drummond introduced her to Lady Osmond Willoughby, who was by her side, who instantly assured her that no one had ever suffered from journeys as she did, that they had just arrived, and that she never could travel except when posting.

In the middle of this interesting communication Sir George Hervey came in, saw Frances, and walked across the room to her. Lady Osmond called him to her side, and told him he must really take *her* advice, that she felt convinced from things known only to *her* that there would be a dissolution, and he must stand for the county. However, the announcement of dinner put an end to this conversation. Frances found herself seated between Lord Harlech and Mr. Grimshaw. With this latter personage she had not yet made acquaintance, and they sat side by side at dinner, each ignorant that they had occupied a good deal of the other's thoughts. Frances was civil, and talked to him of the country in the neighbourhood, and the usual commonplaces of dinner conversation. She thought him dull and underbred, and had begun to despair of getting any information out of him, when her other neighbour suddenly said—

‘Miss Fortescue, do pray say something for the sake of old acquaintance. Save me from my fair companion, who will make me die of starvation, she asks so many questions.’

Frances laughed as she answered, ‘It’s so long since we had an argument, Lord Harlech, that I am hardly up to our usual battles. But I am surprised to meet you here; I thought you were in Norway, and that that was your present locality.’

‘So I was, till last week, and a delightful time we had of it; but I came back to enable Claude Trevelyan to get away, and I am only here for forty-eight hours. I saw him yesterday; but I daresay you have heard since that?’

Frances did not answer this question. It was ten days and more since she had heard from her affianced husband; but the time had not seemed long. Had she missed the letters? She did not enter on the question, but wondered why her other neighbour had started perceptibly as the name of Claude Trevelyan passed Lord Harlech’s mouth. He however did not make any comment, as she half thought he was going to do; but she could see he was listening for her answer. She therefore returned to the subject of the fishing, and questioned Lord Harlech as to his success in that

sport. Miss Willoughby joined in the conversation, and declared she had killed one salmon herself; such a whale it felt on the rod, and it was nothing but 'a poor little seven-pound grilse!' From fishing in Norway they came to discussing the Norwegians and their habits and country. Frances was interested; and from that the conversation led to comparing English peasantry with those of more northern latitudes. Frances retailed a little of the information she had gained from Sir George Hervey, and mentioned his name as her authority, and also that she was staying with him.

'Ah, you are staying there. I wonder if he would ask me? I've always heard of him as such a model country gentleman, and of his wonderful abilities. He was a great loss in the House of Commons. However, I trust he will soon be back again there, that is, if we are to have a dissolution, which must come this summer, I'm afraid; it will be an awful bore; Sir George is one in a thousand, I have always been told, and it will be something gained to give him a chance of reappearing in the House.'

Frances brightened up at this praise of her friend, and she looked up across the table at him. He was watching her, and a smile lit up his face as he caught

her eyes ; he stopped for an instant in the remarks he was addressing to his cousin Flora, causing her to turn her head to see what had attracted his attention. She just saw the smile of recognition, and noted it. Her eye glittered for half a second, but it was only momentary, and she was again all attention to 'dear George.'

Another person also noticed the look and the response, and that was John Grimshaw. Though he had gone on eating, still from the moment he had caught the name of Trevelyan he had listened attentively to the conversation of his neighbours ; and while seeming to be engrossed by dry Sillery and the *dinde truffée*, he had been wholly bent on hearing what was said by them. He was no fool, and if there had been anything to learn he would have learned it, but the conversation had turned to general topics ; and the Trevelyan name had not again been mentioned. What had arrested his attention had been the mention of Sir George Hervey's name in connexion with elections. He knew that his patrons, Mr. Cavendish and Sir Victor, would, in the event of an election, both support the Liberal candidate, who it was now supposed pretty generally could only be Sir George Hervey ; therefore the agent opened his ears, but he heard no more either on that subject, and

all he could do was to note the smile of recognition between his young neighbour and the future candidate, commenting on it in his own mind, wondering whether they were related, for evidently the young lady took great interest in that which concerned him.

After dinner, Frances found herself at first rather lonely, as Mrs. Drummond was carried off to a remote corner of the music-room in which they spent the evening. However, she was not long left to meditate. Helen Willoughby, who could claim a previous acquaintance, came up to her, and taking Frances' hand in both of hers, said—

‘I am so glad to meet you, dear. I thought it was going to be so dull, but I am dreadfully afraid of you, you are so clever I know, and hate balls and going out, but I should like to be a friend of yours, if I may.’

This was all said in a half-childish, half-spoilt manner, and in a *trainante* voice which amused Frances very much. Helen was a pretty little creature, and she knew it thoroughly, perhaps thought more of her personal attractions than others did; she affected the picturesque in her costume,—anything to attract mankind. This evening she looked as if she had stepped out of an old picture, with her hair dressed high above her forehead, a curl hanging on one side, her dress cut

square in front, and mittens. It was but an exaggeration of the fashion of the day, but no one could fail to notice it, and this was enough for the little lady in question. She was a consummate flirt, and was, moreover, used to being much made of wherever she was. A man could not come into the room without her instantly monopolizing him, and if possible drawing him into a half-bantering conversation. Poor little girl, she had never had a chance of knowing better; her foolish mother doted on her, because she was pretty and attractive, and chose to fancy that in Helen she saw herself reflected. From her she never heard anything but selfish and worldly maxims: 'she must sell in the dearest market,' and so forth; what wonder the child—for child she still was—had grown up shallow and worldly too? 'To marry, and marry well,' and 'till then get all the amusement and admiration she could,'—such was her creed.

However, now there was no man present, and she thought she might as well make up to Frances, whom she knew to be 'an heiress, very clever, and in a very smart set in London.'

Accordingly, she seated herself by Frances' side, and rattled on to her with all the gossip she had collected during three months' visiting, told her endless stories about her own family, and made herself, as she thought,

very agreeable. All the while poor Frances was quite overwhelmed by her volubility.

In process of time the gentlemen appeared. Sir George came up to Frances, and sat down on the sofa beside her, saying, 'Well, my dear Miss Fortescue, this is much more the sort of life you are used to. I hope you like it; it is a great improvement on our quiet sober ways.'

Frances turned to him and said in rather an indignant voice, 'Sir George, that speech of yours is very unkind; if you only knew how I have been thinking of our pleasant evenings at Cossington, and wishing I was back there, instead of having to face all these strangers, you would not have said that. How very enjoyable all our readings have been, and I liked singing to you and Mrs. Drummond very much.'

'You are likely to have that enjoyment again directly, I think,' he answered, laughing at her energetic voice and manner. 'Flora is coming our way. I know she wants to hear you sing, for she told me so at dinner.'

Whether music was the only object in Miss Cavenish's head, we will not undertake to say, for though she did gracefully and earnestly beg for a little singing, 'the one thing of all others of which she was most passionately fond,' we should hardly have said so judging from the way in which, having established Frances at

the piano, she returned to Sir George, and during the time that the song lasted, pertinaciously plied him with questions. He answered in monosyllables, and when Frances was rising from the piano, walked across the room, and saying to her, 'May we not have one of my old favourites?' sank into an arm-chair behind her, and covered his eyes with his hand, and drank in the rich, fresh notes of Frances' beautiful voice. As the words of the German melody—

'Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath
Das man vom liebsten, was man hat
Muss scheiden'—

fell on his ear, he sighed a heavy sigh, which made the singer turn and look anxiously at him for an instant, and then, with an unconscious sigh that seemed the echo of his, she turned from the piano, regardless of the plaudits that followed her steps.

As she was making her way to Mrs. Drummond, she was caught by Helen Willoughby, who announced they were getting up a round game, and could by no possibility dispense with Frances. The latter reluctantly consented to play, but from that moment the fair Helen paid no heed to her. This young lady established herself between Lord Harlech and Mr. Paul Campbell, a nephew of Mr. Cavendish's, who was staying

in the house, and announced to Lord Harlech that she was too stupid and must go partners with him, and he, nothing loath to be made much of by such a pretty girl, settled himself as comfortably as he could under the circumstances, and proceeded to bet gloves, parasols, and fans, with his fair partner, and to laugh and talk with her in a way which formed a marked distinction to the manner in which he addressed Frances, who also was a novice in the game, and whose mind wandered far too often from her cards to leave her any prospect of making a fortune. She would hardly have been recognised as the same girl who had been the life and soul of the Cossington school-feast, as she sat there abstracted, and with a pained expression on her usually bright young face, which was not in keeping with the lively tone of the conversation round her.

Once or twice Sir George, when in the midst of a long argument with Lord Donnington about subsoil draining, and the management of the experiments on this subject at the next meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society, had caught her eye ; and then, for a few seconds afterwards, perhaps his conversation was not as consecutive as was usual with this very practical man of business.

One other man in the large party also watched her at-

tentively, and this was John Grimshaw, who, the moment the ladies had left the dining-room, had found out her name from his neighbour, and from that moment had proceeded to make her his study. This, then, was his unconscious enemy, this the girl whose thousands were coming between him and the scheme of his life! Yet she was fair and gentle; could he set to work deliberately to try and thwart the happiness of her young life, separate her from her love? Yes, it must be so, the revenge would be sweeter, for who could fail to love her? To Flora he also gave much of his attention,—‘serpent, treacherous, hard woman, is there *no* point vulnerable? it cannot be that I shall not find it if it be so.’ But no, he could see nothing; patience, daylight will come, if he wait long enough for it. In the meantime, he had to listen to Lady Osmond’s stories of how great a sway she had ever exercised on the opinions of the country; and of how she, with her delicate, highly-wrought organization, had to undergo more responsibility, met with more ingratitude from servants, friends, and daughters, had more (to believe her) to do than a whole Cabinet of Ministers. He groaned in spirit and endured: truly John Grimshaw was in good society, and for that honour, the penalty of undergoing the vagaries of a fine lady was but a trifle to pay.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCHEMING.

' It is an ugly world, offend
Good people, how they wrangle !
The manners that they never mend,
The characters they mangle !
They eat and drink, and scheme and plot,
And go to church on Sunday,
And many are afraid of God,
And more of Mrs. Grundy ! '

F. LOCKER.

THE hours in the Cavendish establishment were by no means early ; and the next morning when Frances wandered down to the breakfast-room she found not only that there were no signs of breakfast forthcoming, but that evidently it would be some time before it was ready. So as it was a clear frosty morning she stepped through the window, which was wide open, on to the terrace which ran along the south side of the house, and began to look about for a pretty point from which to sketch the house, and at the same time get in a bit of the rich distance and sea. She was fully

engrossed with this when she felt her shoulder lightly touched, and Sir George Hervey laughed as he asked her what she was so busy watching, so early in the morning, and what she had been thinking about.

‘I was first thinking of a sketch,’ she answered frankly, ‘and then I began to think about my future home. There is a certain similarity in the two places. At the moment you came up, I think I was meditating whether I should ever be able to bring my home up to the Cossington model ; it is the one I admire of all others, so true in tone and spirit. Oh ! if Claude could but have had the advantage of such a home, what a difference it would have made to him, poor fellow ; but he has never had a high standard put before him. I think expediency is Sir Victor’s one idea. I don’t think I minded it so much till I came amongst you, and talked about things to Mrs. Drummond. Perhaps I ought not to have said so much ; but when one has met with such sympathy one gets bold. Poor Claude, shall I ever be able to teach him ? *Chi lo sà.*’

‘My dear child, I’m sure I’m very glad if what you say is so ; we are very quiet old-fashioned people ; but I’m thankful indeed if anything you have seen or heard can help you in your future life. Yes ; Kate is an angel, I think, and what there is of good is all owing

to her. I think often that the trials, the heavy crushing ordeal she has gone through, has opened her heart to all, especially the young. She is a good friend to have; you can have no better counsellor; and she is very fond of you, both for your own sake and your father's.'

'It is very good of you both to be so kind to me; ah, how I shall feel the change on leaving you! When I look back to my arrival, and how frightened I was, it seems so strange to think of.'

'You must dwell on the duties lying before you. I'm afraid, from what you say, that your home is not a *very* congenial one. Never mind, you will ere long have one of your own; and then you can put the highest standard before you. Do you imagine you will live in London?'

'I suppose so; part of the year at all events. Claude is very fond of his regiment, and has no intention of leaving the Guards. It makes an unsettled kind of life; but it cannot be helped.'

Here the speakers were interrupted by Flora Cavendish, who joined them on the terrace; but so noiseless was her catlike step, that they were unaware of her approach till she began—

'Good morning, my dear Miss Fortescue; surely a *little* imprudent to be here without shawl or hat.'

'George dear, how are you? How did you sleep?

I put you in the old quarters, you see ; it would never seem like a visit from you, did you not occupy that room which has always been called yours ever since I was a child. George, do you remember the way I used to help you with your work and copying in the old Parliamentary days ? We've not had a good political talk for ages. I've been looking to you to have all my ideas set to rights. Grimshaw told me that there is every probability of an election before long ; you must return to the old post. I am most anxious about it, and could canvass much of this part of the county ; indeed, I think there is but little chance of an opposition, and that it would be a walk over.'

'Hardly, Flora ; I must say that sometimes I find myself wishing strongly that I was in Parliament ; but then my opinions are not those of some considerable portions of the county. We had better let well alone. But all your guests are assembled,' said George Hervey ; who, whilst talking to his hostess as they moved from the terrace through the French window into the breakfast-room, had been also watching Frances' movements, to see where she seated herself at the table. But had he any intention of occupying a seat by her, it was doubly frustrated by Flora saying—

'Come, then, and sit by me, and we will talk it out,'

and by the fact of the two seats on each side by our heroine being instantly secured.

Before long a discussion was started by their host as to what arrangements could be made for the comfort and amusement of his guests.

Henry Cavendish was a sportsman in the fullest acceptance of the word ; and whether it was summer or winter, saw nature and life from that point of view. If there was one being whom he pitied more than another it was any one who was debarred from either hunting in winter, fly-fishing in the early summer, salmon-fishing later, and shooting from August 12th. He himself pursued each of these amusements in turn ; but as occupations, not amusements, with all the science which he was capable of bringing to bear on them, he was in earnest in all he did, and he did it with his whole heart. Once in his life it had been suggested to him that he ought to be in Parliament, he received the idea with an amount of horror that caused the suggester to ask the reason why. 'Box myself up in your dreadful town, when there is hunting to be had before Easter ! and my rivers are full of trout after that. Thank you, I'm not quite such a fool as to do that, as long as I can find any one else to do it for me,' and so the matter had remained. Henry Cavendish was liked by high and

low,—the kindest, most open-hearted landlord, and the truest friend : a genial nature that woke affection in all those around him, and made even John Grimshaw sometimes repent that he had so vowed to wreak his vengeance on Miss Cavendish if ever he had the chance.

This morning Mr. Cavendish appeared at the bottom of his well-appointed breakfast-table, clad, as was his wont from September till March, except on Sundays, in a grey shooting-jacket, corduroys, and boots, looking the picture of a healthy English country gentleman ; and now, raising his voice a little, he called down the table : ‘ I suppose that we shall all be inclined for shooting this bright morning. I am told that in one of the lower woods the keepers have seen plenty of cocks. I was sure we should have some over with this bright moon. Master Paul,’ he said, turning to his nephew, ‘ do you remember what a peppering you gave poor old Bran last year ?’

‘ Ah yes, indeed I do, sir—a melancholy fact ; and I assure you that it took such a hold on my nerves, that I “ evolved from the depths of my moral consciousness ” that shooting was not my vocation in life, so I parted with my Purdey, and took a stall at the opera with the money. At all events, it is safer for my friends. I’m sorry to confess it to you, uncle Henry, you will

think me such an unworthy scion of your family, but I am obliged to add that it procures me infinitely more amusement; therefore Bran may proceed in peace to-day, and perhaps I may be allowed the honour of escorting these ladies somewhere.'

'I don't suppose any lady would be so rash as to commit herself to your charge, Mr. Campbell,' said Helen Willoughby. 'I mean to devote myself to sketching, and nobody is to come with me, unless it is you, dear,' she added, turning to Frances.

'Come, come,' said the good-natured host, who thought Helen really meant to do what she had said, than which nothing was further from her intentions. 'I'm not going to allow anything so unsociable; everybody must be devoted to public amusement after luncheon. Miss Fortescue, I know, rides beautifully, George told me so; and there are horses for her and the Miss Willoughbys. Paul, you will ride with them. I suppose nobody else is disposed to forego the shooting, even for the sake of seeing the beauties of the neighbourhood of Gosford. Flora has planned an expedition to a place a long way off; but as you are all good horsewomen perhaps you won't mind it.'

'I should much like to join the riding-party, Henry,' said Sir George Hervey from the end of the table. 'I want very much to see a farmer near there, and I'm sure

I'm no loss in the shooting way; can you find me a nag?—your stables seem well filled.'

'Oh, of course, my dear fellow,' began the host, in his kind heart wishing that every one should be pleased; but his sister interrupted him in her softest tones—

'But, Henry dear, have we really another horse available? we mustn't promise more than we can perform. The coachman told me yesterday that Mufti had fallen lame in the off shoulder; and that he must have complete rest for a long time; it is most unfortunate, George; I'm so vexed; but you will come with Lady Donnington, the Duchess, Lady Osmond, and myself in the break, and then we will stop anywhere you like.'

Mr. Cavendish, who was evidently used to succumb to his sister's stronger will, merely elevated his eyebrows for an instant, and looked surprised.

Sir George, poor man, caught in his own trap, could do nought but bow his acceptance of his cousin's offer, and declare his readiness to escort the ladies.

Paul Campbell meanwhile had watched the byplay of this proceeding; he was fully alive to the subject of his aunt Flora's shortcomings, scheming, and selfishness. Moreover, he was brimful of mischief and spirits, saw through her game, and thought she deserved paying off. He muttered to himself, 'What the deuce is the woman up to now?' and then, after a pause of a few seconds,

knowing that her age was a point upon which his aunt was specially tenacious, he turned to her, and began, ' Uncle Henry, are there any descendants alive of that old mare that I used to see about the place when I was a boy, and that the coachman said aunt Flora used to ride when she was a young lady ? She was a handsome animal. Dear me, what a long time ago that does seem now ! '

' Well, Paul,' began Mr. Cavendish, when a movement on the part of his sister caused all the party to rise from the breakfast-table, and so interrupted the conversation ; but of the answer Paul recked little ; knowing that his arrow had gone home, was enough for him ; he was satisfied to let alone his equine investigation.

The shooting party assembled in the hall, and before long a picturesque group of sportsmen, dogs, and keepers were seen wending their way down the broad glades of the park, up the opposite bank, and away over the brow of the hill, to the wood which was their destination.

The Willoughby girls challenged Paul to a game of billiards. Lady Donnington and the Duchess came to sit in Mrs. Drummond's room, to talk over some county business. The Duchess was a very great lady in that part of the world, holding the reins of government in her own hands ; for the Duke was a poor creature, whom she

had married late in life for position and for a home, and who allowed her to do as she pleased, or perhaps was not man enough to prevent it. She was a good-natured woman, shrewd and quick-sighted, but a victim to her own love of power, and even now she had followed Mrs. Drummond to her room, mainly, as she said, to give her a hint to let her brother mind what he was about, 'for,' she said, 'I am told that there is to be a general election; now if George Hervey will come forward on the Liberal interest, I shall support him tooth and nail.' This announcement was premature at the least, for there was no vacancy, no prospect of immediate dissolution; but the Duchess thought it a good moment, as she said, to give the Whigs a hint. She had just now also another object in her visit to Mrs. Drummond, which was to announce that a great review of her husband's yeomanry and volunteers was to take place, and to beg that they would all go over to see it.

Mrs. Drummond promised her own and Miss Fortescue's presence, but said she never answered for her brother, that the Duchess must ask and settle it with him.

This negotiation, however, occupied more time than it has taken to narrate, and was not brought about by the pompous little Duchess without much circumlocution.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEDITATIONS.

‘Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver,
Through the wave that runs for ever,
By the island in the river—
Flowing down to Camelot.’

TENNYSON.

FLORA CAVENDISH having carried off Sir George to see a neighbouring farm, under pretence of looking at a steam-plough, Frances was left very much to her own devices. She was in low spirits; had she been asked wherefore, she could hardly have said,—but so it was; and though it was the last thing likely to raise her spirits, she drew from her pocket a letter of Claude Trevelyan’s which she had received that morning, and which ran as follows:—

‘GUARDS’ CLUB, Nov. 29.

‘DEAREST FRANCES,—I am sorry I did not write sooner, but I’ve been very busy; lots of our fellows have been

on leave, and I've had to do double work ; besides, there really was nothing at all to say. The governor has been in town for a week, and told me to ask you if you would come down to us the middle of next month ; we shall have some people with us, and he means to shoot the big covert ; but I forgot that does not concern you much.

'I hope you may come ; he will write to Lady Okehampton and ask her to come. He is anxious to settle something about the time of our marriage. I shall be glad to see you. Don't break your neck in riding Welsh ponies.

'I won our regimental cup at our steeple-chases the other day, and a hatful of money into the bargain ; very lucky, the funds were very low. Don't you find it awfully slow in your present diggings ?—Yours ever and a day,

CLAUDE TREVELYAN.'

Frances read this choice epistle through twice, and then deliberately tore it into the smallest fragments, and dropped them bit by bit into the fire ; then she sat down, leant her head on her hands for a long time, and thought. Slowly her eyes filled with tears, which forced their way through her fingers ; more and more quickly they flowed, till at last she sobbed like a child, as though her heart

would break. What about? and what for? Had she been asked, she could not have answered, beyond the fact that she felt daily more and more out of spirits about her future prospects.

Perhaps Claude's matter-of-fact letter seemed to her less even than usual of a lover's letter. But could this surprise her? Had she not known Claude from a child? his mind and his character could have nothing in it that was new to her. Thus she reasoned with herself, but for a long time was not the less unhappy. At last her grief seemed to subside; she dried

her eyes, took up a pen, and with a weary heart proceeded to answer her cousin's letter. As the answer contained little more than an acceptance of Sir Victor's invitation, contingent on her mother's being able also to go to Castle Grange, we will not reproduce the document.

Having accomplished this task, Frances put on her hat to take a turn before luncheon in the garden, feeling unequal to joining the noisy party that she heard chattering in the billiard-room. Slowly she walked down the steps and turned to the garden, which was a large and beautiful one, on the south side of the house, and which extended, falling terrace by terrace, to the foot of the hill on which the house was built.

When you had quite reached the bottom, you found a brawling trout stream, shadowed by some large and very beautiful cedars, and under these, seats were arranged so as to catch the prettiest points of the view. Frances made for these, and sat down on the one most concealed by the sweeping branches, and which was quite close to the water's edge. The little stream rushed quickly over its rocky bed, making noise enough to prevent other sounds from reaching the ear. It was exactly the scene to soothe and comfort Frances' troubled soul, and she drank in the rest and quiet. Truly it was a beautiful spot; the deep shade of the trees fell across the brook, making some of the pools look inky black. Grey rocks jutted above the water's edge, with a rich fringe of fern-leaves falling over them. Here and there a speckled trout might be seen lying still behind a stone; others would rise at the flies as they skimmed the surface. The sun shone warm, and the light fell in chequered beauty on the hill opposite. Frances sat unheeding all else, in mute enjoyment of this natural beauty, and was soon lost in a reverie to which it would have been impossible to give the clue, but in which Sir George Hervey's image returned oftener than perhaps she was at all aware; so deceiving are even our thoughts.

At last she was roused from her day-dream by hearing a voice, immediately behind the tree, say in decided, and rather angry tones, 'Well, George, I can only judge, of course, by what I have heard and what I saw in London last season. I never saw a more decided pursuit of a young man than hers and her mother's. I suppose the marriage will be very soon, that is, if they can bring him to the point; but surely this is enough of this uninteresting subject. I cannot tell you how delighted Henry and I are to have you here. I began to think you were angry.'

'What on earth should I be angry about?' began Sir George, when Frances stood suddenly before them, perfectly unconscious that the first observation she had heard related to herself, so completely were the words at variance with the facts of the case.

Therefore, rather surprised at the pained expression on George Hervey's face, and the angry flush on her hostess's, Frances said simply, 'I was so surprised to hear voices behind me. I had quite lost myself, and did not hear you come up. What a delicious day, and what a perfect view! Have you ever had the house photographed from here? it would make an excellent picture with this sort of half-light reflected on the gables. Would it not, Sir George?' she asked, turning

to him, as she did not seem likely to elicit an answer from Flora.

He answered absently enough. ' Was she acting, or had she not heard ? ' He could not say. But all parties were much relieved when the luncheon-bell rang ; and with a hurried excuse Flora Cavendish walked to the house, leaving her guests to follow.

CHAPTER XV.

COUNTRY-HOUSE AMUSEMENTS.

'The shrug, the hum, or ha; these petty brands
That calumny doth use:—oh, I am out,
That mercy does; for calumny will scar
Virtue itself; these shrugs, these hums, and ha's,
When you have said she's goodly, come between
Ere you can say she's honest.'

A Winter's Tale.

THE party at luncheon was surprised to find Mr. Grimshaw had returned. He had hurt his hand, he said, and could not shoot more that day. It did not seem much of a wound; but Flora Cavendish could do no less than ask him to join their party in the break. She would willingly have avoided doing so, as she considered him much in the position of an upper servant, and thought him unfitted to join their party. Having refused a horse to George Hervey she could not send Mr. Grimshaw with the riders. Thus her plots and contrivances were visited on her own head. But John Grimshaw could contrive and scheme too. The hurt

was a mere scratch, nothing to stop a sportsman for an instant; but he wished to be where he could observe some of the guests from whom the shooting had parted him. He had been watching Flora the night before, and something in her manner to George Hervey had awakened a suspicion—as yet light as air,—that this woman, proud and insolent to him, was scheming to win Sir George Hervey's heart. This had brought him home. He must see—he must watch. If this was so, she must be foiled—and how? But that was for subsequent consideration. He wished to see Frances. She was the intended wife of Claude. That marriage also must be stopped; still she had been very gentle and kind in her manner to him, and so genuinely sorry when he said he had hurt his hand. Unasked she had fetched some styptic from her room, and with flushed cheeks had asked him to try it, saying it had often cured her. Now John Grimshaw had a heart very sensible to kindness. This little act caused him to feel differently to her. Was this girl's happiness bound up in her cousin's love?

More subject for watching.

Helen Willoughby appeared at the luncheon-table faultlessly 'got up' in her riding costume. She announced her intention of riding a very unmanageable horse; and an argument ensued between her and her

mother, which ended, as usual, in the girl pooh-poohing all her mother said, and doing as she liked herself. Then a good deal of banter began between her and Paul Campbell, and a laughing about unpaid bets. Much mock entreaty for a photograph which was withheld. Frances was surprised to listen to such conversation as this:—

‘No; you can’t have it, I say; besides, I look a perfect fright in a photograph—worse than I need. Don’t tease me, Mr. Campbell—you must do without. I’ll give you Mary’s—not the same thing, indeed. I’ll tell her, I declare I will—tiresome man. Pick up my whip. Yes, of course, I drop my things,’ etc. etc.

Lady Osmond meanwhile had commenced a long dissertation to the Duchess upon the amount of duties which devolved upon her—how she had everything to do.

‘Humph, my dear Duchess, I assure you—humph—I had this morning to write three letters and to speak twice to my maid about the things she is making for me. Mary never helps me. She is perfectly useless; and why I should have such a daughter I cannot think.’

The account of these onerous duties sent the fat busy little Duchess into fits of laughter. She never spared any one—did not care what she said; and she told the pompous helpless Lady Osmond ‘that if they

were her girls, she'd make them both work—not that she could see there was anything to do.'

The horses came to the door. It had been settled by the elders that the three young ladies were to dispense with a chaperon, and that Paul Campbell was escort sufficient. Helen Willoughby would fain have had Lord Harlech of the party, but pheasants were more attractive, and he remained in the coverts. She was constrained to put up with Paul only. Sir George contrived to put Frances on her horse, arranged her bridle, and as he did so could not help saying—

'I do wish I was going with you, my dear child. Take care of yourself.'

'It will not be as pleasant as our Cossington rides,' she answered simply, and then wondered why his eye brightened ere he stooped down and examined the girths. However, he simply repeated the caution for carefulness, adding—

'You haven't got your old chaperon to look after you.'

A sharper voice than was generally heard issuing from the lips of Flora Cavendish interrupted him, saying—

'My dear George, you really must come. You are keeping Lady Donnington and Lady Osmond waiting. The grooms will take great care of Miss Fortescue, I'm sure.'

Again John Grimshaw opened his eyes and ears.

The expedition went off quietly enough. There was no *contretemps* of any kind. The party went and returned safely; but before they reached home all were much wearied, and some slightly cross. Their supposed pleasure had lasted too long. Flora, during the drive back, was very caustic in her comments upon intellectual young ladies, and went into ecstasies over Lady Osmond's daughters,—‘It was so nice to see such thorough girls, full of life and spirits, no attempt at being political or blue.’ Once her attack upon Frances Fortescue was more open, and she talked about ‘heiresses who hunted about for titles,’ in so marked a way that Mrs. Drummond was roused from her gentle kindness to say to her—

‘My dear Flora, I think you are labouring under some very great mistake if you are talking of Frances Fortescue. Some one must have grossly misinformed you. The engagement between her and her cousin, Mr. Treveleyan, was entirely the seeking of that gentleman's family. Sir Victor's heart was set upon it; even so long ago as when Frances was but ten years old, Sir Victor had asked Lady Okehampton's leave to let the children grow up as an engaged couple. This she declined to do till they were of an age to judge for themselves.—You look surprised, George. I did not say all this before, because it was no one's affair but

their own; but now, when I hear such reports have been spread as those which evidently have reached Flora's ears, I think I am bound to say what I know.—Mr. Grimshaw,' she added, turning to the lawyer, 'you are a friend of Sir Victor's, and I am sure you will answer for the marriage being of his seeking.'

'Certainly, certainly, Mrs. Drummond,' said the man appealed to, not sorry to witness the discomfiture of Flora; 'everything you have said is what I could have said myself had my opinion been asked.'

'Well, it's not worth discussing,' said Miss Cavendish, darting a look of scorn at the agent. 'Dearest Kate, I am so glad to hear I have been misinformed, and to think after all that this is the happiest of love marriages; but somehow they seem to see but little of each other. What did you say, dear Lady Donnington?—the regimental duties? Oh! we all know what guardsmen's duties are, don't we, Lady Osmond? or shall we ask Lord Harlech?—the most convenient—barrack duties, bank guards, musketry instruction, etc. By the way, how well he sings! It gives one intense pleasure to hear such real Italian singing and such vocalization.'

This again was a hit at Frances, who seldom sang anything but English or German songs, and never in

the *bravura* style of which Lord Harlech was fond, and, to do him justice, was fully capable of executing.

They reached home at last. George Hervey followed his sister to her room, and, when he had shut the door, instantly began saying—

‘ Kate, darling, I was so glad to hear you say what you did to Flora. What a pity it is that she is so heedless with her tongue! I don’t think she means anything, but she has several times to-day said such hard things. She is much altered, and yet I can’t help liking her, she is so affectionate.’

‘ George, I don’t want to make mischief; but don’t trust Flora too much. I am afraid she is not quite true.’ And, contrary to her wont, Mrs. Drummond put her arm round her brother’s neck and kissed him as he sat in his chair. ‘ You don’t know what a mean thought is, dear. Oh! I am glad we go home in a day or two. I like dear old Henry. He is very honest and kind. One would think he ought to have had a good wife and children about him; but I suppose all is for the best as things are. How few people come up to your standard! I daresay I am very foolish to tell you all this, however.’

‘ Why, Kate, what do you mean? What’s the matter?’ said Sir George, in a lazy voice, as he drew

his chair nearer the fire. 'You labour under some wonderful delusions about me, my dear. Just look at Donnington: there's a useful, practical man for you. I wish you had heard his speech the other day at the opening of the training-schools. Every word told.'

'I read it, George,' said Mrs. Drummond, in her driest voice, 'and I could see pretty well whose brains he had picked. Ah! it's no use your talking, brother mine. Unfortunately I know you too well. You don't make me secretary and reader to no purpose. I could trace your thoughts, if not your very words.'

'Come, come, Kitty, never mind all that just now. Listen a little to me. I want you to have a talk with that child. One of your real "helping talks," as I used to call them.'

'What child, George, and what about?'

'Why, Frances Fortescue. I don't think that the girl is very happy,' added the baronet, poking the fire diligently as he spoke; 'and I fancy somehow that she does not look forward to her future lot with much pleasure. I feel an interest in the child.' Mrs. Drummond lifted her head quickly from knitting, which, however, she resumed without comment. 'I should like to think she had a little of your help. I had a good deal of talk with Lord Harlech last night, after you ladies had gone to bed,

about that young Trevelyan. You know it's the most difficult thing in the world to get guardsmen to speak of each other's characters, perhaps because, as a general rule, they haven't much to speak of,' he said, smiling, 'and it was some time before I could get him to open at all on the subject. However, I suppose at last he made out that I was asking with a good purpose, and he spoke very kindly about the young fellow, who is his subaltern; but from what I could gather he did not seem altogether the sort of man I should think suited to Francesa. He talked of an athlete, a first-rate boxer, swimmer, and shot, but could say little about his character beyond the fact that he is amiable and popular with his brother officers. He said nothing to lead me to think he would be one to understand Francesa's nature. She is unlike most girls, at least as far as I can say from my very small experience. With a keen spirit of inquiry she combines a tendency to lean much on any one she can respect or look up to; but she is capable of seeing when hers is the stronger mind. She has quick perceptions, and could be a devoted wife where she truly loved; a magnificent plant that needs a little training, I should say. Now, will you talk a little to her?'

'My dearest brother, I'll do what I can; but I do not exactly see why she makes you her father-confessor.

I don't much like young ladies talking over their feelings with men that are neither their fathers nor brothers,' said Mrs. Drummond, who was perhaps a little old-fashioned in her ideas, and a shade more particular than people of the present day are apt to be.

'Now you are unfair, Kate,' answered Sir George quickly. 'Frances Fortescue has made no confessor of me. It is with the greatest difficulty I can ever make her speak of her own life or herself. No, she has made no confidences, nor do I seek them. What I have said I gather mainly from what others have let fall about her future husband. I think the girl does not look happy. I have no doubt she would open to you, and I know she could have no kinder or more sympathizing adviser. Now I suppose I must go and dress. Flora has made me promise to drive her in the pony-carriage to Upton to see the Reformatory. I wanted you and Frances to see it, but she says Henry can't spare the horses for the break, and that there is a croquet-match to-morrow to which all the young ladies are pledged.'

'Frances won't like that,' answered his sister. 'She never plays at croquet; and the Miss Willoughbys are not likely to want her. Ah! what flirts those girls are. The way in which the old Duchess

described how quietly Helen contrived to engross every man that came into the house, was very amusing; nothing escapes that sharp-sighted old lady. By the bye, when is the yeomanry review we are to go and see at the Duke's?

'Next week, but I forget the day. Donnington has been talking about the election again. He wants me to sit for that borough of his in Lancashire. I thought the matter was so settled that it seems strange having to reconsider it. Besides, I have plenty of work; and how shall I be able to give it up? It is a great responsibility, Kate. What do you say?—I suppose I shall get the same answer I always have.'

'Yes, George, wait and you will see your way better. But I am sure Parliament is the proper place for you, if there is a good opening for you. But you must go free, not as Lord Donnington's delegate. You would be the right man in the right place. Others can do your work here. It was my father's great wish for you. He used to say, "Ah! George is working now for his future career. Go into Parliament; but go a free man." These are stirring times, and there is work cut out for those who have the good of their country at heart.'

'Bravo, Kitty, you ought to be in Parliament, I think. Now I must really go.'

CHAPTER XVI.

A JEALOUS WOMAN.

'O most delicate fiend,
Who is't can read a woman?'
Cymbeline.

THE visit to the Cavendishes passed off with little else that was worthy of record, save that Flora contrived by one means or another to get several long *tête-à-tête* walks and drives with her cousin Sir George. That she was not one whit nearer her object at the end of the visit than at the beginning, she distinctly felt, sorely as it galled her; nay more, George Hervey remained entirely unconscious of her purpose. But Flora's nature was neither to be turned nor changed. She was one of those people whose mind once set on a point never wavered or lost sight of it. Long and crooked were the paths that she often had to follow; but that she minded not; her attention was absorbed by the pursuit, and she gave no heed to aught else. To

Frances Fortescue, from the first moment that they met, she had taken a deep dislike, partly from the antagonism that a cunning and plotting mind must ever feel when brought into contact with one of which 'straightforwardness' was the main characteristic, and still more from the intuitive jealousy she felt of a girl in whom she could not but see that George Hervey already took a keen interest.

Flora Cavendish, acted on no principle but expediency, no law but her own strong will. From a child she had been accustomed to underhand plans, which oftentimes had taken her weeks to mature ere she accomplished her purpose ; and with what we may be excused from describing as a 'Florentine' turn of mind, would prefer to attain her object by a tortuous rather than a straight road. The main scheme of her life had been to marry her cousin, and she was as fond of him as could consist with her great selfishness. Her inclination towards him sprang of various elements, and arose partly from having determinately thought herself into it at a time when home was irksome to her, and partly from her ambition to shine in the world as George Hervey's wife ; and she was not without a dim respect for his pure and lofty character, though his real inner worth and depth were far beyond her

ken. With the natural instinct of a jealous woman she looked forward, and saw, as through a telescope, what might come of the feeling for Frances, of which as yet the germ only lay in Sir George's breast, altogether unsuspected by himself. In vain she racked her brain to weave new schemes; she could devise no means, when Frances once left her brother's house, to separate her from Sir George; she must return to his house for an indefinite period. Many a restless hour had Flora lain awake pondering on this. In vain she must bear the torture, for torture it was. She felt further removed than ever from her cousin, and she hated Frances with a burning hate.

The time came at last for parting with all her guests, who were dispersing on their several ways. Her leave-taking with the Cossington party was curious to watch.

To Frances she was more than ordinarily sweet in manner, and her voice had a melancholy tenderness that would have deceived, had it not, like her first greeting, gone so far beyond the requirements of the situation.

'Ah! it is too sad saying goodbye, dearest Miss Fortescue, but we shall, I trust, soon meet again,—Sir Victor Trevelyan has kindly asked me to come and meet you and your dear mother. I am so fond of the

dear man, he always is so good to me; he tells me the Willoughbys and Lord Harlech will be there. George dear, goodbye, you are sure to be here again in a day or two as usual. You know you and I have never looked through the proof-sheets of that pamphlet we concocted together; but, dear me, how wicked of me, I forgot Miss Fortescue was not in the secret! Forgive me, dear.'

'Forgive you! what do you mean? Oh! that old paper. Why, it has been behind the fire months since, and I hope a better thing by far has replaced it. Hey, Kate?'

'Yes, I think the one you have printed is more to the purpose,' said Mrs. Drummond; 'but we must go.'

And sure enough it was time to move, as the Duchess, who never spared friend or foe, had said in an audible aside to Paul Campbell, 'See that woman, my dear,—glad as she can be to see us all go, and pretends to be so very sorry.—Can't think why she asked me.—Sure I don't like her.'—And then she screamed to Mrs. Drummond,—'Mind you come on Thursday, and bring the pretty gal with you—humph.' 'Sir George will see to that, though,' she added to herself.



CHAPTER XVII.

A FRESH START FOR A PUBLIC LIFE.

'There is great talk of revolution
And a great chance of despotism.'

SHELLEY.

THE monotonous, tranquil life at Cossington, which Frances found so delightful, was taken up again on the return of George Hervey, his sister and his guest, to their home. However, this quiet did not last more than a few days. The yeomanry review was in prospect, and a day or two before that various exciting rumours had reached the ears of the county.

Parliament had but just met, and it was at the beginning of the session that the Government chose to bring forward a very important measure. There had already been two stormy debates,—the Opposition making a resistance to the measure proposed, called conscientious by themselves and factious by their enemies. The whole measure became, to the astonishment of the

movers of the bills, a party question, and it soon became apparent that another debate and consequent division must settle whether the Government were to stand or fall. But the Minister of the day was not to be so treated, and had openly announced the determination of appealing to the country. This was exciting enough. To the division of the county in which George Hervey lived, the news came fraught with double significance; for, had not the old Tory member who had sat for thirty years the undisturbed representative of his county, announced 'that he would resign his seat, and hoped that the favour shown to him would be extended to his son?' Here was matter to excite the county, who, much as they liked and respected their member, had allowed him to remain unopposed more from respect to his age and character than in deference to his opinions.

This retiring from the scene with a bow, and 'My son, sir,' was more than the other side could stand, and in market-place and by the cover-side the whisper passed until it ripened into an open loudly announced determination that the matter could not pass so, and that a candidate would be found to contest the seat, and if possible wrest it from the Tories,—for Tories they were, and Tories only, who would go hand in

hand with Sir John Leicester in his opinions. That a candidate must be found was certainly decided; but who he was to be was the point. Moderately Liberal, immoderately popular, one man alone was marked out by all, one name only was in every one's mouth, the wind blew but in one direction, and soon far and near resounded but one cry, that Sir George Hervey of Cossington Park should be asked to allow his name to be put before the public as the Liberal candidate.

The leading great men in the county, those whose names carried most weight, were pretty equally divided. The contest would be sharp and expensive. George Hervey, of course, could not be unaware of what was pending, but thinking that it was unlikely that the Government would be beaten, he paid but little attention to the matter, knowing that Sir John had determined to see that Parliament out.

Still he anxiously debated with himself whether he should accept the proposition should it come. It was a question of public or private life for the future.

Nothing of the weighty considerations uppermost in his mind transpired before Frances; and if she thought her host quieter and more preoccupied than was customary, she hardly would have guessed how important was the subject he was turning in his mind.

One evening George Hervey had gone to bed saying to himself, 'Twenty-four hours must settle the question now for Government;' and the result of a long and careful consideration of the question, and some talk with his thoughtful sister, had been that, 'Should he be asked to stand he must do it,' as from position and means he was the only person who could well come forward.

Next morning, seated at breakfast, the baronet was steadily opening the pile of letters before him, Mrs. Drummond was pouring out the tea, when Frances, having leisurely scanned the first column of the *Times*, and commented on various births and deaths to Mrs.

Drummond, unfolded the other half of the paper, and with an exclamation of surprise read: "Defeat of the Ministry! Probable dissolution of Parliament!" Sir George, do you hear? Government is beaten, and we shall have a general election. Dear me, what a change! What a life poor mother will have of it for the next six weeks with Lord Okehampton!' said the girl, as she glanced down the columns of the paper. 'A very close thing indeed: 315, 308! What an exciting division!'

As she had carelessly made these comments, Sir George appeared entirely abstracted, and beyond a slight smile to his sister, made no comment, except expressing surprise at the division being so soon over.

He hurried through his breakfast and left the room, leaving Frances much surprised at his silence and want of communicativeness, as she thought.

The day wore on, and quietly enough did the two ladies pursue their vocations. The only interruption was a visit from Lord Donnington and Mr. Cavendish, who came over to speak to George Hervey on business. That they came virtually, if not ostensibly, to ask whether he would come forward, did not transpire, but so it was, and when they left the house, the county gentlemen had succeeded in their mission, and he promised to commence an immediate canvass,—the only condition being that he should not be fettered; that, though a Liberal, he should be considered free to vote as his judgment should dictate. They were too glad to have him, not to fall into his terms. And so they left, not without many expressions of their gratitude.

Here was indeed a change of scene! Frances was not long kept in ignorance of it. Sir George stopped her, at the close of the evening, and said, ‘My dear, I—that is, you have so kindly often expressed a wish to see me at work in Parliament, that I want to tell you that I mean to try to get there. There will be a good fight for it, but what is worth getting is worth

fighting for. Any way, I am in for it! And I thought,' he added, as he took her hand, 'that I should like to tell you myself, my child.'

Frances was completely surprised, and overwhelmed him with good wishes and congratulations. 'Oh, you must succeed!' she added, with all the enthusiasm of her age and sex. 'You have right and ability on your side.'

'Well, we shall see! There's much canvassing to be done. By the way, I am to have the support of your father-in-law elect.' Frances winced. 'And I suppose I shall meet you at his house, from what Cavendish told me. You say you must go soon from here?'

'Ah, yes! and I have so few days here now. Will they all be taken up with your canvass?' said Frances. 'We shall lose all our rides, I'm afraid.'

'Not quite all! I mean you to ride to the Duke's and see the review the day after to-morrow. It's a most beautiful place, and the good little Duchess means to support me, and whoever she fancies has the Duke's votes. If I get in I shall come and see you sometimes in London, when you are a steady married lady, and instruct you in the British constitution,' he added lightly, as she turned away from his gaze, which had

been fixed on Frances' face with an expression of great affection.

' Ah, I shall never forget all the kindness I have received here!' answered Frances with a sigh, as she turned to the door. ' If you come in I shall congratulate the county,—not you.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

'LE MARI DE MADAME.'

'In a Devonshire lane, as I trotted along
T'other day, much in want of a subject for song,
Thinks I to myself (perhaps inspired by the rain),
Sure marriage is just like a Devonshire lane.

In the first place, 'tis long, and when you are in it,
It holds you as fast as a cage holds a linnet ;
For howe'er rough and dirty the road may be found,
Drive forward you must, for there's no turning round.'

REV. J. MARRIOTT.

'DUKE, my dear, can you attend to me a moment ?
There really is no time to be lost. Those
papers can't signify now. Bless the servants, I believe
they are all gone crazy. Bad enough to have their
heads turned by real soldiers. As for my woman
Gibbs, I really believe I could have guillotined her
with the window, craning herself out of my dressing-
room window after a pack of boobies she would not
look at if they were in plain clothes ; and then, because
I go into my own room and ask for my bonnet, she

starts and screams like a maniac. Serve her right if I had pushed her out of the window,—a great ugly thing! Why, none of these precious yeomanry would look at her if they did see her. But now you'll really remember, my dear, what you have to say to these people at the dinner. I daresay they'll all be tipsy by that time though. Not much use talking sense; but the newspaper people will be there, so for mercy's sake don't forget that we are going to support the Liberal interest, "the only one which a man of sense and conscience can consistently support." Remember that, my dear Duke, and propose the health of the Liberal candidate.'

The Duchess of Arlington, for she it was that in these strange terms addressed her patient spouse, who was at that moment engaged in dissecting and magnifying an earwig, turned to her husband for an answer. It did not come for some time, so she startled him by a further word—

'Hey! what! gone to sleep over your nasty messes, and on this day? Really, Duke, do stop. What's the use of knowing what that thing is like inside? eats and drinks, I suppose, like the rest of us, when it can find anything. Now, do you remember what I said? We support the Liberal party; and here's a fine chance

to make it known. I'd have supported Hervey if he had stood as a Mohammedan. Good man—useful too—does his work quietly—miles too good for that minx Flora Cavendish—nasty mean thing, with her plots and schemes. Tell you, my dear, she's like the poor woman Betty at the lodge, wild to get married; but, as Gibbs said to me the other day, "La, your Grace, but if nobody on't have her, what's she to do?" and that's Flora's case; and the men are about right too for once, nobody on't have her. But, bless me, there's the first troop, and I have to dress; and, my dear, you ain't fit to be seen. Gibbs! Gibbs! if the men haven't turned your head, bring me my things; and you, *do* go and dress yourself.'

'Well, well, Sue, there's plenty of time,' said the quiet old gentleman, whom fortune had made Duke of Arlington, sorely in disaccordance with his own tastes or wishes. 'Oh, we are Liberal now. I wonder why, Boxer?' he observed, patting a pet terrier on the head. 'We were Tories a few years ago; but Sue says I can't understand, and that she has gone into the question. Dear me! there, the frills on her jacket have swept away all those larvæ that I took such pains to get. I shall have to walk miles to get any more. There is not one stagnant pond left on the property. And I've got

to make this speech. By the way, I mustn't talk about politics there. I know that would not do at a yeomanry dinner. I must remind Sue.—I daresay she'll say I'm all wrong, but it would never do. Well, like her, I like Hervey. He's a gentleman, and maybe in these days that matters as much as anything. What an odd thing life is! Here I am—plagued with seventy thousand a year, and when I should like to be able to give all my time to the rotifers, and to find out something for myself—condemned to tenants' dinners, county meetings, debates at the House. Alack-a-day!'

The Duke of Arlington was certainly the most unducal-looking person that you could easily find,—a small, frail, shy-looking man, short-sighted, shambling in his gait. You might fare far afield, and not see so eminently rustic and homely-looking a student. He looked the village pedagogue, which he would fain have been.

Little matter of surprise was it, therefore, that his brisk little wife should have taken the reins of government into her own hands. Managing and arranging were her pride and glory. She had managed (or thought she managed) everything from the moment she grew to years of discretion. The daughter of a poor squire in Northumberland, where the Duke had some posses-

sions which required his presence twice a year, she had met him, and had followed him from town to country, and by degrees obtained great influence over him, advised him about tenants, farms, and leases, regardless of everything but the object in view. The Duke—quiet little man—for a long time quite failed to perceive anything unusual in her movements, till one fine day one of his friends rallied him about the lady's pertinacity, when he exclaimed, 'Dear, dear me, is that what she wants? What a fool I was, to be sure! Ah, well, she will do as well as any one else, and she knows exactly how I have classed the spiders. Yes,

I will not forget,' and accordingly the next time the quiet little man was in her society, after being a few minutes alone in the room with her, he suddenly fell on his knees in front of her, and said, 'Susan, they say that you love me; take this,' extending his hand to her. At first she was so taken aback by the oddity of the language in which he had chosen to make his offer, that she could only go into fits of laughter. However, as the Duke stuck to his point, and required an answer forthwith, Susan Maitland made up her mind at once, to do what had always been the object of her ambition in the abstract, and at the end of a very few weeks they were man and wife. She was in

the main an excellent wife, though she was considered by her equals but a poor specimen of a Duchess. He was alternately in a cloud of metaphysics, and plunged into scientific inquiries. She became virtual manager of the whole property. Up with the lark—a practice to which her north-country habits had used her,—she would surprise her establishment at unwonted hours, and interfere and find fault and set right in household details, into which never had Duchess thrust her nose before. She was a terror to the idle servants who had fed and imposed on her husband for years. They must work or they must go, she would say, and accordingly great changes were wrought in Athelstane Manor. She was kind and good to the poor and to all her neighbours, but imposition she could not and would not stand. Thus had matters gone on ever since they married, some five-and-twenty years before the time we meet her. And the Duchess of Arlington, spite of all her peculiarities and 'strange ways,' as they were called, was a person who carried much weight in the various counties in which her husband's property lay.

Now having arrayed herself in every colour of the rainbow, she once again summoned her Duke, found him no farther advanced, so proceeded to fetch his coat, tied his neckcloth, and pushed up his scanty

gray hairs, and after giving him sundry finishing pats on the back and shoulders, proceeded triumphantly, with him in her wake, to the saloon, where the guests were to assemble previous to the review.

They were a motley group, for the manor-house had been thrown open to the wives and children of the yeomen as well as to the county families; and here were farmers, squires, tradesmen, lawyers, doctors, the whole country-side, arrayed in their best. The Duchess greeted one and all kindly, many of them affectionately, inquired after the children, prescribed in a loud voice for some, commented on the affairs of others, calling all the men of the party by their surnames. 'Gracious me, Thomson, you out of bed, and here! Was there ever the like of men for imprudence? Why, your wife's a fool not to have locked you up.'—'Ah, Eliot, so you see people don't break their hearts after all about you; girl married some one else,' and so on, and so on. Suddenly she looked round: 'Duke, Duke, I say, where's Hervey? Lazy fellow, not to be here by now. Oh, there he comes, and, bless me, got that girl riding with him. Well, Hervey looks well in uniform. La! I'm as bad as the maids every bit. Wonder what Miss Flora would say. Pretty girl that; miles too good for the scamp Trevelyan's son, who isn't worth

much if he's a chip of the old block.' Sir George Hervey had persuaded his sister to let him escort Frances on horseback to the review, for, as he rightly said, it was pleasanter to see it in that way than in a carriage. He had tried to induce Mrs. Drummond to ride also, but that she would not stand, and came in her carriage.

The day was drawing near for Frances' departure. There had been much talk about the pending election, as they rode over the beautiful moorland across which lay their path; still, animated as was the conversation, it was strained cheerfulness. Frances openly, and with the simplicity of a child, lamented leaving Cossington, and groaned over the uncongenial society of Lord Okehampton's household. 'Ah!' she said at last, 'I cannot even see my dear mother for a quarter of an hour alone. He will not allow her to leave him day or night.' This was in answer to a query about her mother, and why she was so lonely at home.

By degrees the conversation dropped. Sir George's manner was absent and constrained, he was not aware how absent. His young companion once or twice addressed him, and failed to receive an answer. Of what was he thinking? Hardly could he have said. Maybe he would have answered, 'the coming election.'

had he been pressed ; but it was not really so. He was thinking solely and only of his companion ; thinking of her in a way that would have terrified him had he realized his thoughts ; for to him, with his high and scrupulous ideas of honour, a girl betrothed stood little otherwise than as one already married.

Sir George, as we have said before, had never been in love ; and his feelings towards Frances had stolen so quietly over him, that he had never analysed them. He liked her, and her society, ways, and manner ; and was pleased, perhaps a little flattered, by her deference to his opinion, and her reference to him for guidance and instruction. She, poor child, did not love the man to whom she was engaged, but had never inquired into her feelings regarding her host, so as to ascertain that she was beginning to care for him more than for any one else. She looked on him as a kind guide, and one to whom she might safely go for advice.

Silently they rode ; and for half-an-hour had spoken but little, till they entered the Park gates, and felt that the ride was coming to an end, when Sir George began, 'Our last ride, Frances. Well, I shall not forget it. What a different life I shall be leading for the next few weeks ! By the bye, did I tell you that I was asked by Sir Victor Trevelyan to stay at his house to canvass ?'

'Oh, when shall you go? You know I have promised to stay a long time there; and I should be so glad if I could get you to talk a little to Claude about the tenants, and what improvements can be made in cottages. When will it be?'

Sir George's face brightened for a moment as he listened to Frances' artless, openly expressed wish for his society; and then a cloud fell over his face as he answered, 'I hardly know. Grimshaw spoke to me about it a good deal, and said that your stepfather's property ran in and out amongst Sir Victor's, and made canvassing tedious work; for, of course, his influence goes dead against us.'

'Ah yes; that is the worst of it. How shall I ever get on with him, now that I have been taught so differently by you and Mrs. Drummond? But here we are; and there's the Duchess, looking like a sample of all the colours that a dyer can produce. What a good-natured, shrewd woman she is!'

'Ah, Miss Fortescue, glad to see you so well taken care of,' was the greeting she received from the lady in question. 'Getting quite a west-country accent, I declare. Pity you can't stay altogether with us—hey, Sir George? Why, bless my soul, the man's vanished. There never were real soldiers half so keen as these

sham ones. Mustn't call them sham, though, to-day. Ah, there he is, talking to Lord Donnington. Doing a bit of electioneering. You come with me, my dear. There are the party who are going to ride. They'll look after you. Keep near the saluting-flag. It is the best place to see the fun, and a grand view of the country besides. Ah, one comfort is, Flora Cavendish isn't here to-day. She tried hard for an invitation, but I wouldn't give it. Nearly got it out of my little Duke, though. Said she wanted to see the chrysalis of the death's-head moth—all humbug; but I just came up in time. Now we must start. Duke, take care of poor dear Lady Donnington;' and away she went.

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CHAPTER XIX.

A DISCOVERY.

'Alas! there is no instinct like the heart.'

BYRON.

'O God, that we had met in time!
Our hearts as fond, thy hand more free.'

THE day was glorious,—one of those delightful mornings that are almost peculiar to the west of England, when the air is balmy, with a sweet freshness and softness that seems to revive the whole system, and to bring new life alike to mind and body.

The Duchess was right when she said the view was worth seeing. The saluting-flag, near which Frances and her companions were placed, was a spot whence you commanded the scene far and near. A rich undulating foreground; the park on one side stretched for miles down to the sea, and on the other met the distant moorland; the mountains of South Wales beyond that

again rising in stately grandeur, veiled in a thin film of haze, that made them look higher than they were. The sea before them was covered with fishing-beats, which were leaving the bay at the beginning of the mackerel season. But beautiful though the scene was, the spectators had but little attention for it. The view they could see any day, the yeomanry only once a year. The county was proud of the well-grown athletic body of men who were called the Athelstane West Yeomanry Cavalry. In the eyes of the populace they were the bravest and noblest of soldiers; and even those who were better judges than the clods, the officers who made their usual tour of inspection, pronounced them 'second to none' as yeomanry. George Hervey was their commanding officer, and known to most of them in the market-place, hunting-field, and all places of county gathering; and proud enough he was of the smart young men he had collected. And now the exciting business of the day was to begin. The inspecting-officer appeared upon the ground, with his aide de-camp, and accompanied by various military men connected with the county. He rode slowly up and down the ranks, inspecting the dress and appearance of the men. Then began the active operations, and the marching past in slow time. When

the band struck its first notes, however, the admiration of the multitude knew no bounds ; and they cheered in a lusty and very unsoldierlike way as the first troop passed the saluting-flag. Now, whether it was owing to the cheering or the music, no one knew, but Frances' horse became fidgety, and made sundry plunges and kicks, which, however, she sat as quietly as if she had been in her chair. She patted and calmed it, apparently, but any one who was observant of horses or their ways would have seen that the animal was still fidgety and excited. At length the marching past in slow time was over, and George Hervey took his place as colonel beside the inspecting officer ; and then the band again struck up loud and martial music. This time it was too much for the poor frightened horse ; it reared and plunged ; with a rush it bounded forward ; and, seizing the bit in its teeth, proceeded to fly across the park, scattering the assembled multitude right and left. The jangling of bits, swords, and bridles, and the noise of the artillery, as the gun-carriages swept by at a swinging canter, still increased the terror of the animal. Firmly did Frances keep her seat. Though the pace was almost racing, she could as yet guide the horse, but check it she could not. All this had passed, as it were, in a moment ; and

till now the Colonel's attention had been riveted on his men. Suddenly he caught sight of the vanishing figure rushing across the broken ground before them. That it was Frances he saw in an instant, and his heart gave one bound, and then its action seemed to stop. It was a feeling he had never felt before; but he had no thought for himself;—for her it was an absorbing terror. The horse was steering its course to a part of the Park where, though Frances knew it not, Sir George was aware that a road was cut and sunk. It was on the brow of the hill; a previous Duke, disliking the sight of traffic which he could not stop,—owing to a right of way,—had sunk the road, so that it was quite unseen. The drop was about twelve feet, and it would be hidden till she was immediately on the spot. It was a fearful moment for George Hervey. He ought not to leave his post. His duty was where he was; and in the tumult caused by the troops, no one of his group had seen the runaway. Those who were with Frances knew that by riding after her they would but further madden the frightened animal. There he was, seeing her deliberately guiding it—thinking the rapid rise in the ground might check the animal's speed—to the very spot so fraught with danger. For two moments he hesitated, and then his position as colonel and every-

thing connected with the affair of the day vanished from his mind. He spurred rapidly towards the summit, hoping to reach it in time, and turn the runaway horse's course; but no—the frightened animal flew over the ground! Another second: his heart turned sick with terror. Ah! the horse sees the danger, swerves and rears. Frances, being unprepared, was thrown, and pitched forward over his head, and lay there motionless, with the horse heaving and panting beside her. George Hervey was by her side in an instant. Involuntarily the words 'My darling! my darling!' burst from his lips as he raised her unconscious head, and he clasped her to his heart. But suddenly she gave a start and a convulsive gasp; and, opening her eyes, looked at Sir George, then wearily shut them. By this time the Duchess was close by; and now that he knew she was not dead, the whole state of his feelings and her position flashed on him, bringing a sick cold ache to his heart. No. She could never be his darling; and but for that moment of peril he would, perhaps, not have known how dear she was. He could not think or speak. Mechanically he carried her to the Duchess's carriage, where salts and eau-de-Cologne soon brought the colour to the pale cheek. He mastered himself thoroughly, and there was not a tremble in the

voice which addressed her, or the hand that took hers, as he said, 'Dear child, what a fright you have given us! Thank God you are safe!'

Had her Grace seen more than he thought she had, or was it accident which made her turn to Sir George and say, 'Ah, you did all you could, and gallantly tried to save Claude Trevelyan's intended; but I think now having done all you can, you had best go back and finish your work. We mustn't sacrifice our duty to our feelings, my friend; and all the countryside is waiting for us. Bless us, child—why, you are all right again. No bones hurt? Nothing? That's right. No, no; no more riding, young lady, to-day. Sit still here, and be a good girl.'

Frances was none the worse for her accident, and in half-an-hour was talking, as if nothing had happened, to the Duke and the rest of the party. The review proceeded as before arranged, and the field-day was pronounced very successful by the inspecting general. His congratulations to the Colonel were loud, and the day before the same words of commendation bestowed on his regiment would have given him infinite pleasure. But though he gracefully bowed his thanks, and answered the inquiries with all attention, the George Hervey who left that field was a different man from the

Colonel who came on the ground. He went through all his duties in a dream. A public dinner followed ; the speeches were longer and more ordinary, he thought, than usual. When the time came for his health being drunk, allusions were made to the yet more important position that their honoured Colonel might expect to hold before long, and it required all the power of his strong will to concentrate his attention on the subject before him, and to make an address to these men, many of them members of the constituency.

At last it was done. All the proper healths had been drunk, and George Hervey was standing again in the Duchess's drawing-room, receiving the thanks and compliments of that energetic little lady,—her vehement protestations of support, and denunciations of the opposing party.

Frances sat quietly by Mrs. Drummond, tired and worn out with the long ride and the long day, to say nothing of the violent shock she had received. She was not sorry when the carriage was announced, and with many good wishes and thanks for his generalship, George Hervey, his sister, and Frances left the ducal mansion. The moon shone brightly on their homeward way, and though none of the party were sleepy, or

sleeping, scarcely could there have been found a more silent party. A word or two of comment on the day's proceedings was answered by Sir George in so stiff and constrained a voice that his sister thought something had annoyed him, and lapsed into silence.

CHAPTER XX.

A MIDNIGHT CONFLICT.

'I prithee send me back my heart
Since I can not have thine,
For if from yours you will not part,
Why then shouldst thou have mine ?'
Old Song.

'I think on thee in the night
When all beside is still,
And the moon comes out with her pale sad light,
To sit on the lonely hill.

'I hear thy soft sad tone
And thy young sweet smile I see,
My heart—my heart were all alone
But for its dreams of thee.'

THOMAS K. HERVEY.

IT had been a long day and a tiring day. But midnight, one, two, and three o'clock struck from the Cossington stable-clock, and still George Hervey sat with his face buried in his hands over his bedroom fire. The fire was almost out, the candles flickered in their sockets, and there was through the room

that strange weird stillness which pertains to the late watches of the night. For four hours Sir George had sat thus unconscious of time, and before him lay a lady's riding-glove, which—shall we confess it?—had on it traces of tears.

In those four hours our hero had lived through an age of pain and sorrow. Pain that he had never known before, and yet not quite unmingled with joy,—the joy of realizing that you have an interest in another human being far beyond anything you can feel for yourself. In short, George Hervey, at forty-six years of age, was in love, and knew it at last. One more acquainted with the passion would have found it out before, but, as we have said, before he had not loved; and not a glimmering of the fact had flashed upon his mind till the full light had shone in his eyes, and the glare had well-nigh blinded him. Yes, he knew it now, and had been repeating it to himself for hours. He loved Claude Trevelyan's betrothed wife with a love which, whether they met again, or whether their paths were for ever apart, was, he felt, the one love of his life. Hopeless he knew it was, for of course any idea of speaking of love to a woman engaged to another never crossed his mind. No; the idol he had made for himself must never know of his idolatry. This must

be his task—his hard, heavy task in life,—to be the same to her as he had ever been, and that his own agony of love should never appear. This it was, this crushing of his own feelings, which had caused the tears to fall on the little yellow glove he had picked up as Frances got out of the carriage.

‘My darling, my little darling, I could have made you very happy, but God’s will be done. Ah, I *must* work, or it would kill me soon to go on thinking.’ A few moments later came the thought—was it most pain or pleasure?—‘Ah, and I must meet her, see her often: next week at Sir Victor’s, and with him, that boy, who cannot be worthy of her.’

From sheer weariness at last he dropped asleep. Was it rest or refreshment to dream as he did that Frances was his and his only,—to dream that she told him she loved him through all and beyond all; to feel her arms round his neck; and to wake and find himself alone in the cold grey dawn? No; it was but additional pain, additional weight to add to the load he felt he had to bear. As he rose from the chair in which he had passed the night these words fell unconsciously from his lips—

‘Ah! have I not read, in the words of a deep thinker, that suffering is a condition of our existence in this

world, "and the more our footsteps hurt us, the more it behoves us to tread boldly"? Yes, I have read the words again and again, but never realized their bitter truth. Ah, well, now to work and to carry them out. After all, what is life but a competitive examination?'

He was feverish, and looked dreadfully ill when he appeared at breakfast; but by that time he had written his address to his constituents, and the whole force of his clear far-seeing mind appeared in its terse sentences, well-chosen words, and strong common sense. There was not a word too much. He would be taken on his own terms, or he would be rejected. Truly George Hervey had gained no ordinary victory over himself ere the last word of that address was written.

If he was absent, and answered Frances' queries and his sister's anxious questions shortly, they put it down to the anxiety consequent on the step he was about to take. Maybe his sister was surprised to see it thus affect him; but she was a woman like few, and kept her thoughts to herself; content to receive as much of his confidence as he thought fit to give, and to ask no more.

CHAPTER XXI.

SELF-CONQUEST.

‘ The slow, sweet hours that bring us all things good,
The slow, sad hours that bring us all things ill,
And all good things from evil.’

TENNYSON.

WHAT a strange thing is time, and our estimate of it ! We know for a certainty that every hour is sixty minutes long, and every minute sixty seconds ; but that we knew it, should we believe it possible that the hours, days, and weeks are ever and ever the same length ? No indeed ! Does not the hour spent in waiting for one we love and wish to see seem as though it were moving on leaden wheels ? And at the end of that hour of suspense, when we feel that the minutes are fast gliding away which are taking with them the last chances of seeing the friend we are wishing for, how the heart sinks, what a dead weight and sickness come o’er us, as maybe other knocks and rings are heard in the house, which yet bring not the expected one. At last the clock strikes, tolling the knell of our expectations. It

strikes slowly, but we wish it slower ; when late, at the very last possible moment, comes the expected friend. Then what a change comes over the lapse of time ! There is an hour, one whole hour, of long looked-for enjoyment. You have hardly told, felt, and heard the joy of being together, when again the clock strikes. It cannot be. Yes, another hour of sixty minutes, of sixty seconds each, has slipped by.

Something of this was in Frances Fortescue's mind on the eve of her last day at Cossington. She was not thinking perhaps exactly what we have tried to express, but she was reflecting on the prospective visit to Sir Victor's, and of the dreary length of the days there, and wondering whether she could really have been six weeks all but two days at Cossington. Yes, there lay her diary, and she turned over its leaves, wondering what could have been the attraction of her visit. Nothing more monotonous could have been found than the daily routine—the schools, the poor, a ride, some music, and some reading, such had been the programme—dull enough seemingly, and yet it had been a new life to her, putting different aims before her, giving her new interests, and a higher standard. Was that all ? Frances thought so, and analysed her feelings no further.

Since the day of the review Sir George had been a

great deal away. There was much election business on hand, but had there not been, he would have made work for himself to take him from home. He knew his danger now, and his would be the better part of valour ; he would shun it. Grimshaw had been often with him, and this evening he was to return to Cossington, and dine and sleep there, so that anything of the nature of a *tête-à-tête* would be avoided, thought Sir George ; it was no use dallying ; the wrench had been made that night, when he had watched into the early dawn.

Lookers-on, however, see most of the game, and Mr. Grimshaw's eyes were preternaturally sharp. He had seen something of Flora's scheming during his visit to her brother's, and he had guessed, with the acuteness of his pain-sharpened intellect, even more. He knew Flora's toils were laid for her unsuspecting cousin ; he knew not how Sir George's heart was guarded from all such schemes by his love for Frances, and he had made up his mind to watch Sir George.

Grimshaw liked him. He had respect for his consistent character, and valued the constant courtesy with which he was treated at Cossington, which was so different from the alternate bullying and patronizing to which Sir Victor treated him.

George Hervey had been cautious, but he had not calculated upon one thing when he asked Grimshaw

to come and dine. Mrs. Drummond, under her calm placid exterior, concealed the greatest anxiety on the subject of the election, and, when her brother had gone to dress for dinner, had sent to request Mr. Grimshaw would favour her with five minutes' conversation. One question had led to another, and ere Mrs. Drummond had extracted all the information she required, the dinner-bell rang. This brought to Sir George a period of trial which was almost beyond his endurance. Frances found herself waiting alone with him, her heart was heavy and sad at the prospect of leaving, she was pained at the silence of her host, and at the short answers he gave to her questions. What did it mean? What could it be? At last she went up to him, and putting her hand on his arm, she said, 'Dear Sir George, I wonder whether you know how grateful I am for this visit to you and Mrs. Drummond; if I could but tell you.' She paused. His face was averted. 'Are you angry with me? Have I said or done what you don't like?' she added, distressed at his silence.

He turned to her at these words, and vehemently exclaimed: 'Angry with you, my—child, what has put such an idea in your head? Ah, there, God bless you, dear. I must go to my room for some papers.' And he took her hand, and pressing his lips on it gently, as a father might have done, he left the room.

Victories have been fought, battles won, and crosses of honour awarded. I trow that for this instance of self-denial, and the unspoken love that was crushed back to its heart's core, George Hervey deserved a cross of honour to the full as much as many of those whose deeds have been glorified before the world.

Such is life, and such the true martyr. One day may they reap their reward, for verily this is a world of suffering and broken hearts, hearts that ache all the more because they ache unknown and unseen.

The evening passed off smoothly enough to all appearance. Frances was very quiet; the absorbing subject of the election was sufficient to warrant her silence. Sir George was listening, apparently with the utmost attention, to the reports of Mr. Grimshaw; the statistics, returns, and reports were all produced and commented on. Mr. Grimshaw's information was accurate to a degree; but while voters, landlords, and tenants were being discussed, Mr. Grimshaw was watching another game. He had not failed to see Sir George's eye follow Frances as she collected her things scattered about the room, had seen a slight start, hardly perceptible save to forewarned eyes, as a word about Claude Trevelyan had dropped from Frances' lips. Was this a fancy? He would study his client, and though the roll of names was called over steadily enough there was another subject

uppermost in the agent's mind. It was but an idea, but an idea he would not lose sight of. He had no time then to reflect upon it, or to consider how this might affect his double scheme of vengeance; he must grind on. To Frances he was and ever had been very deferential. She had treated him as a gentleman at the Caven-dishes', and he had not forgotten it, and since then her manner had been kind, and he had thought much about her, and had wondered whether indeed her happiness could be bound up in Sir Victor's son. Now he would observe more closely, he thought; and still as the voters' names fell quietly from his lips his eyes and his ears were widely opened to the living scene passing before him.

The heavy evening finished at last. It was a parting between Frances and her host, for he had to be off at daybreak. He took her hand, and would have been content with the warm pressure, but his sister said, 'Give the child a kiss, George.' It was the way of the family, and at another time, and to another girl, it would have been natural enough, but George Hervey's blood seemed to stop in his veins, and then to run madly surging through them, as he bent his head, and pressed his lips lightly on the smooth fair forehead that was turned to him.

Little knew Mrs. Drummond as she stood with her hand on Frances' shoulder, of the mingled torture and happiness she had suggested to her brother.

' Full many a shaft at random sent
Finds mark the archer little meant,
And many a word at random spoken
May soothe or wound the heart that 's broken.'

And so it ever is, and must be. How little do we know of the innermost thoughts even of those whom we most love ! It is not always a skeleton which is hid from view, but an idol, very often undeservedly worshipped, but which, from our fond weak love, remains ever on its pedestal, little as the world without may suspect that we have erected a temple in our hearts to its honour ; or the passionate devotion with which we retreat into ourselves, to pour out to it in secret our fondest adoration.

Many a man has died on the battle-field, with some love-treasure next his heart, a tress, a glove, a scrap of writing, record of a devotion which none suspected in life: How many die on the great battle-field of life with an image graven deep in their hearts, which not even in the pangs of death will they unveil to a living being ! Is it not written, *Omnia mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis ?*

CHAPTER XXII.

A SOCIAL SALAD.

‘Hear the tales he lends his lips to—
Little hints of heavy scandals ;
Every friend in turn he handles.
All which women or which men do,
Glides forth in an innuendo—
Clothed in odds and ends of humour ;
Herald of each paltry rumour—
From divorces down to dresses,
Women’s frailties, men’s excesses ;
All which life presents of evil
Make for him a constant revel.’

BYRON.

THERE was an unusual bustle at the Warrington station about three o’clock on the day of Frances’ arrival. Such a hurrying to and fro of servants and porters, such calling for boxes, bags, and bandboxes by excited ladies’-maids and footmen, that the poor little stationmaster, accustomed to about six travellers passing through in the day, was driven well-nigh distracted. In the midst of this hubbub another train

arrived, from which alighted Frances Fortescue, who was to meet her mother at Sir Victor's. She had scarcely time to ask the cause of this unwonted turmoil, when she heard a well-known voice saying, as she entered the waiting-room, 'Umph—my dear, I assure you that I never travelled but once by railroad before—umph. I am quite unfit to travel in anything but *my* carriage—umph; but *my* servants telegraphed that *I* was coming down; and *I* wrote to the station man, and said he must be most particular about the engine, for that I could not dream of going unless it was properly inspected—umph; and, my dear, what do you think the man said when I asked about my letter?—why, he answered that all the engines were properly inspected before they left the engine-yard. I was obliged to come this way, my dear, but I cannot think of going back by it. My poor head—umph. Nobody knows what I suffer from my wretched nerves; and I'm obliged to go with these daughters of mine, my dear. They are dragging me to my grave. What is it, Jones? The carriage ready—ah. Well, girls, you must come in the fly; for I can't have the springs weighed down. Jones must come, in case I want anything. Goodbye, Miss Caven-dish, for the present.'

On hearing this well-known voice Frances had

shrunk back and successfully kept out of sight of Lady Osmond and her daughters; but Miss Cavendish's quick eye gave her no chance. The warning from Mrs. Drummond rang in her ears; as the sweet voice and winning manner greeted her carrying falsehood in its very tones: 'Ah, dearest Miss Fortescue, this is too delightful. We shall have a perfect visit, and you will be centre of everything that is bright. Look upon me as your oldest friend; and if I can help you in anything you must come to me.'

Frances answered, in a constrained voice, that she hoped not to trouble any one, as her mother would be

- at Sir Victor's; and after a little more conversation they entered their respective flies, and soon found themselves at Castle Grange.

Lady Okehampton was on the door-steps to greet her daughter, who was soon locked in her arms. Lady Okehampton was unfeignedly delighted to have her child back again; threw her whole heart into the welcome with which she received her, and perhaps the more that she was conscious that one was absent who ought to have been first and foremost to greet her arrival. She herself had been surprised and hurt that Claude had preferred a day's hunting to receiving his *fiancée*, but wisely did not say so—nay, even made a little excuse

for him, in addition to Sir Victor's long-winded and very artificial apologies.

The five o'clock tea-table, an institution we may now almost call 'time-honoured,' found a large and merry group assembled round it. Sir Victor had determined that this should be a pleasant party; and he had succeeded in gathering together people likely to suit each other, if we except Lady Osmond, who had asked herself. The social salad lacked no element in due proportion; there were the pretty elements, the agreeable, the witty, and the well-informed. Flora Cavendish was reckoned a most agreeable accession to any party. Of her real character little was known. She was to society in general only a beautiful, fascinating, agreeable, and clear-headed woman. Then there was the caustic element—John Arthurs,—a man who went 'everywhere;' whose main recommendation seemed to be that he knew the wrong side of everybody's history,—always excepting those in whose society he found himself,—could do anything, everything but praise;—from the beginning of his career—and he had been early launched in London life—he had never been known to say a kind word for or of any one. He was a great talker—talked well and amusingly. How he had got first into society no one could exactly say.

He was ugly and mean-looking, poor, unconnected with any of the smart London people with whom he now lived; still he had achieved success for himself. No party was supposed to be well-assorted, no dinner was likely to go off well, unless the slanderous epigrammatic tongue of Arthurs was there to act the part to society that cayenne pepper does to the salad of which we spoke. He was a quasi-politician, and would retail all the political slander with infinite gusto. He would impute to the greatest of Ministers, and the most upright of men the meanest of motives; and his sallies and innuendos would pass current from their wit. He had blasted many a reputation; and many a broken heart might have been laid at his door. That he had not been repeatedly horsewhipped by indignant husbands or brothers remained a mystery to many. He and Sir Victor suited well; and the scurrility of their conversation when together had before this often driven purer-minded men from the room in sheer disgust. Still John Arthurs was 'the fashion;' and true enough it is that one fool makes many.

Helen Willoughby was the pretty element. She was lively and agreeable, though with nothing but her looks and her sharp wits to help her through life; fortunes she and her sister had none. Lady Osmond had

a good fortune, but she had no more idea of spending a single shilling on any one except on herself than she had of flying. She would say that her whole income, and even some of her capital, was required to preserve that which she described as 'what is due to ME, my dear—umph.' Her daughters had early been taught to shift for themselves. They contrived, by one means or another, to be the neatest, smartest, and best-dressed girls in London. True, their gloves, parasols, fans, and trinkets were generally the result of bets, which the young ladies took good care always to make with a certainty of winning—and that their debts considerably exceeded their allowance; but that was matter for their tradespeople, not for society.

The sportsman of the party was Lord Harlech; a popular man, as we have said before, from his kindness and light-heartedness and *laissez-aller*. He sang well and danced well. He was heir to twenty thousand a year; and this was a fact that the Miss Willoughbys kept well before their eyes.

Science was represented in the person of Mr. Nemesis Fairley. He was a bore, but he also was the fashion. He held a moderate position in the scientific world by virtue of science, but a strong one by virtue of his purse. He was the *great* machinist of the day, in his

own opinion; and the *rich* one, in that of the scientific world. The rest of the group hardly deserve separate notice, they were just the 'fill-ups' who helped to keep up conversation, and to keep the greater personages going without coming out with any individuality of their own. They mustered altogether twenty in the house. Most of them were previously acquainted; and, on the whole, it was supposed to be a well-assorted party; and, as Lady Osmond remarked, 'My dear, there's no necessity to explain to any one who any one else is—umph. They are all in our own set.'

Frances had not yet met her intended. The assembled party were gathered round the tea-table, and were laughing and talking merrily, when the door opened, and in came a mud-bespattered young man, who, with but half an apology for his appearance, went up to Frances, and said, in a loud ringing voice, that was as audible as a trumpet, 'Well, Frances, come at last! What a time you have been buried with those old fogies! High time we should wake you up a little.' Frances' reply was inaudible, but the colour came quickly to her cheeks. She looked much annoyed and ashamed, and as little like a girl meeting her affianced lover after long absence as a woman could do. Claude, nothing daunted, pursued the conversation in a good-

natured free and easy tone, detailed his run at great length, with an absorption in his subject common to fox-hunters, then parenthetically observing that rustication had improved Frances' looks, went on to tell her the history of all his past sport, and gave her an inventory of his particular prowess in each line; to all which remarks she answered in constrained voice and monosyllables.

Then John Arthurs, who never failed to attach himself to the prettiest girl in the room, came up and joined in the conversation; asked Frances where she had come from—from Sir George Hervey?—‘Ah, that fellow who thinks he is going to set the world to rights before he has settled what his own principles are,’ sneered the wit; and then ensued a conversation between Sir Victor and him, in which the tone seemed so false, and the anecdotes so cruelly ill-natured, that Frances wondered whether she had ever heard the like before, or whether it was Cossington life that had altered her view of things; but as all laughed at the stories, and applauded Mr. Arthurs as ‘delightful,’ she concluded the change was in herself, and sat gravely by, lost in astonishment. Claude rallied her on her silence; it was in vain; the more she tried to be interested or amused, the wearier she found the attempt,

and the more she was shocked at what she heard. Fortunately for her, the company were soon allowed to separate. Frances found her way to her mother's room; but thither, alas! Flora Cavendish had already proceeded, and was amusing Lady Okehampton with recollections of former days, and affecting intense happiness at being with her old friend. She had purposely forestalled Frances, and though she rose to leave the room soon after she came in, the effect she wished for had been produced, and Lady Okehampton, instead of being ready to talk of the things nearest to Frances' heart, could only talk of the delightful creature she was, and of her winning affectionate ways. Flora Cavendish had played her game to win, and in this case with eminent success. Few, however, would have recognised the brilliant beauty, or the manners which were considered so fascinating, if they had followed her to her room, and watched her when alone, and seen the malignant expression in her eyes, as she dropped the French novel she was reading while she awaited the ringing of the dinner-bell. It was enough to have frightened away any friend, man or woman. She was thinking over the part she had to play—thinking of George Hervey,—whom, as she thought, she loved, even while that evil light was in the beautiful eyes. Yes,

he was coming there—to the very house she was in. Could there be a chance yet? Ah, she must deal her cards carefully; she passed her soft hands across her forehead, and bent low over the fire, as though to seek counsel in the very flames. She judged others by her own standard; and of resistance to temptation she had no idea. It would never occur to her to think that George Hervey, if he loved Frances, would not instantly give way to his love, and that anything like principle would prevent his trying to win her. And yet, though Flora did love her cousin more than anything on earth, she would not scruple to sacrifice his feelings, could she but succeed in marrying him herself. For a long time she reflected, and still saw no light on her path. Should she consult Sir Victor at once, or lay a train to lead him to suspect George of trying to supplant his son? No. Neither scheme offered a prospect of success. Sir Victor would see through her. He knew her well, and she felt it. He was of such a mistrustful and suspicious nature, that he would instantly imagine she had some motive for her suggestions. He was untruthful himself, and could imagine no truth in others. He would read her plan, and probably hinder instead of helping her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HUMBLE SERVANT.

‘Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.’

Henry VI.

‘THERE is a varied programme before you, my good friends,’ said Sir Victor Trevelyan, as he sat next morning at the head of the breakfast-table. ‘Claude, my dear boy, I need not ask you what you mean to do. Of course stick to your fair neighbour whithersoever her fancy may lead her. But for others there is a choice. It is too late for pheasants, but I want to get rid of some rabbits on an outlying bit of ground, and I fancy we might get about three hundred head. Harlech, I know, would like to shoot every day of the year. Then we politicians must be off directly, I’m afraid, on election matters, to attend a meeting to decide who is to nominate and who is to second our future member. He will meet us there, and I suppose

I shall bring him back here. Sir George Hervey carries his own recommendation, and I am told, though I do not know him, that I can't fail to like him. You can tell us, my dear,' said Sir Victor, turning to Frances, who, however, was for once so absorbed in an argument with her intended, as not to appear to hear a word that had been addressed to her.

This mattered little to Sir Victor, who, suspicious as he was by nature, had not the faintest idea that anything more than an ordinary acquaintance existed between Sir George and his intended daughter-in-law.

Miss Cavendish, however, heard the question, and marked the evasion of the answer.

Sir Victor continued his plans for the day, and ended by saying, 'To-morrow, mesdames, we shall, I hope, be able to amuse you a little more. The hounds meet here, and there are horses in any number for those who like to ride. Mr. Grimshaw, a word with you, if you please, before I go.'

Castle Grange was, to all appearance, the seat of luxury, with every attraction that money could bring to it, every concomitant of riches. The plate, the wines, the *cuisine*, all were perfection. The house itself was filled with art-treasures of every description, and priceless pictures hung on the walls. The cabinets, of *pictra*

dura ebony, and others inlaid with ivory, were only less valuable than the china they contained. It was the South Kensington Museum in the country. Such was the abode of the man who followed Mr. Grimshaw into the business-room, and when the door was closed, sank into an arm-chair, and leaving the agent standing, tossed a letter across to him, saying, 'Read that, and then tell me how the deuce I'm to answer the fellow.'

Grimshaw picked up the paper at his feet, and read a demand from an urgent creditor for money,—money at once, to meet a long-standing bill. It was not so very formidable; merely a matter of £300. No great sum, one would say, for a man whose income was supposed to be thousands on thousands.

Grimshaw read it through, and with a low whistle laid it down on the table against which he leaned.

'Well, what do you say? How shall we meet it?' said Sir Victor. 'Of all inconvenient times! I'm cleaned out, and you must help me to money somehow. I wish to Heaven this marriage was over, and then we should see our way a little! One thing is certain, it must be *very* soon, for didn't you tell me that those Jews mean to foreclose? What slavery this is!' and the great man passed his hand over his forehead, and turned to Grimshaw for an answer.

‘Sir Victor, I hardly know what to do,’ said the man of business, as if he were revolving possible means of relief for his patron in his mind, when he was but gloating beforehand on the thought of the rain which he hoped must soon overtake him. ‘I have,’ he continued, ‘got every shilling I can from the property, yet perhaps I could borrow a little on your personal security from old Hewitson. I can try, sir; but really every fresh sum, however small, is risking the breaking down of the whole estate under the burden. Do you not think, sir, a little retrenchment would do more good?’

‘What nonsense, man! You know I must go through with things till this marriage is over, and then will retrench fast enough. Once let us get hold of that girl’s money, we will see what can be best for Claude. Well, it’s all for his sake that I have schemed and arranged the marriage, for there is nothing, to my mind, in the least attractive about her. A dull sanctimonious minx! She isn’t half good enough for him. Well, you will see that bill paid, Grimshaw; and there’s a gun for you if you can get back in time. Ah, but I forgot! I suppose you must go to see about the election? We must support this fellow Hervey of course, but he’s a saint and a reformer, and talks of duty and all that

stuff, as if I didn't know that it is place and power they all hunt after. They can't gammon me !'

'The opposition will be very strong, Sir Victor, very strong! Sir John Leicester has a brother, an Australian, who has come over made of bank-notes and nuggets, and will help his nephew with any money he likes; and as I hear Sir George will not bribe directly or indirectly, I fear he will have but a poor chance. Why, the other side are paying forty-five pounds a vote about Helminghurst, and there is no end to their money.'

'Won't pay! What an infernal fool Hervey must be, if he cares about the thing. A man has no business to stand if he won't give the party a chance. I'm sure it cost me money enough when I tried.'

'We shall know more about it next week, if, as I hear, the Duchess gives him her support. Of course that is worth about 150 votes, and with that we may yet carry it.'

'I must go. Don't forget my orders, Grimshaw, to the keepers,' and Sir Victor left the room.

Grimshaw's face, as his master left him, was a study in itself. An expression of scorn and contempt which passed over it as he lifted his eyes to the portrait of his chief, which hung over the fireplace, was followed

by a sigh of relief as he found himself alone again. It was curious to watch him, and to mark the struggle of good and evil in his mind. His had not been at first a bad nature to work on, but he had so given up his life now for many years to the pursuit of his vengeance on the two beings he most hated in the world, Sir Victor and Flora Cavendish, that his whole disposition was changed. Possibly subsequent kindness might have made him forgive, but, irritated and wounded deeply in his affections by the ill-treatment of his young son, his first feelings of resentment had been kept alive and exasperated by the supercilious and cynical tone of Sir Victor's subsequent treatment, and had been intensified and directed on a new object by the contemptuous rejection of the ambitious Flora; and so the wound was kept rankling, till the idea of revenge became sweeter and sweeter day by day, and engrossed him more. His, after all, was but a little mind. Great thoughts, even in vice, he could not attain to. He could aim no blow but to Sir Victor's purse and pride, and with that he was content. John Grimshaw was a keen-witted mean-minded man, and all his actions partook of this nature. He was narrow in his affections as in his hatred.

We have said he was sharp-sighted; he had seen

something of Miss Cavendish's byplay, and had guessed even more. He had seen something of George Hervey's feeling also, here again he had imagined more. He had some slight warmth of feeling for Frances, for she had treated him uniformly with kindness, nay more, had she not seemed unfeignedly glad to see him, *the agent*, in the drawing-room of her intended father-in-law? Quick though he was, his gratified vanity had prevented his seeing the true reason for the hearty greeting and warm clasp of the hand. Frances Fortescue connected John Grimshaw with happy Cossington hours. He was not *la rose*, but he had lived near the rose. Just as it sometimes happens that sounds harsh and unmusical in themselves bring back thoughts of scenes and visions of individuals on which we delight in imagination, even so the sight of this man's mean face, and the creak of his hard voice, recalled the thoughts of the kindly intellectual features which had beamed on her admiring eyes, and the thoughtful harmonious voice in which truths she had never heard before, first fell upon her greedy ears.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

‘Eine Bluth, eine Bluth, mir brich,
Von dem Baum im Garten,
Keine Frucht, keine Frucht für mich.
Darf sie nicht erwarten.’

UHLAND.

IF Claude Trevelyan failed to prove himself attractive to his intended bride, there was one young lady in the party assembled at his father's house, who took very good care to show that she was of a different opinion, and nothing that he said or did passed without attention or praise from Helen Willoughby. This girl, as we had said before, was an innate flirt, and a flirt intensified by abundant practice,—every man that came within reach was fish for her net; but flirt though she was, she had an eye to the main chance, and had arrived at the conclusion that as Lord Harlech did not seem likely to fall a victim to her charms, she had better instantly find the next most eligible young

man. There was little doubt, in her judgment, that Claude was the one to answer that description; true, he was engaged to be married, and to a girl whom all his family liked and approved; but that mattered not to Helen. She very soon found out that the young couple were not ardent lovers, and being of an unscrupulous nature, she determined to see if she could not make Claude care less and less for Frances, and more and more for herself.

The way in which she set to work was curious enough, and her pertinacity was worthy of a better cause.

The first evening she had managed to secure Claude's attention, and opened her batteries by great praise of Frances, of her intelligence and her learning: 'Oh! so wonderfully clever. Do you know, Mr. Trevelyan, all the men at the Cavendishes were talking of it; poor me, I was left quite behind, you know. I never was anything but mamma's pet, and never could learn anything except to love horses and dogs' ('and *men*,' soliloquized Claude). 'How delightful it must be to Frances to think that she will have such quantities of horses and dogs too! I saw the kennels as I came up; do you think you could spare ten minutes some morning, if I am very good, to show them to me? and do tell me,

was Sir Victor in earnest when he wrote to mamma that he would lend me a horse when the hounds meet here? it would be so enchanting.'

Claude interrupted her only to assure her that if his father hadn't a horse fit for her, he had.

'O no, no, that will never do; what will Frances say if I take her mount? O no, never mind me, I can drive to the meet with mamma, if I can persuade her to let *my* coachman and *my* horses take a little wholesome exercise,' said the lively young lady, looking across at her parent, who was giving Sir Victor the history of her early youth, and of the consideration in which Queen Adelaide had held her.

'Frances has no intention of hunting,' said Claude; 'indeed, I never dreamt of asking her. She will not mind, and I will take the greatest care of you,' he added, looking admiringly into the brilliant eyes of his companion; so the matter was settled.

This was but one conversation amongst many, but the tendency of all was the same; the study of the young man's habits was brought to bear, and every foible encouraged, and every vanity pandered to.

Of Frances what shall we say? She remained still in a dream, and it seemed a task almost beyond her strength to throw herself into the amusements of the hour.

But first we must glance at the
found there; the walks led by
through rich fir woods. Here are
placed under the most beautiful
We have called them fir woods, but
the prolific soil in fullest and richest
spruces, with their feathery branches
against hollies which were the great
cork-trees thrived in fullest beauty
evergreen shone out bright from
which nestled in warm corners; the
primroses peeped from the thick velvet
and upwards wound the walk, till the
summit of the hill was reached, where
artificially cut away, and a sort of terrace
from the north wind, planted with
discrimination, on which were arranged
circle, and overlooking one of the most
landscapes in the country.

Frances and her mother had walked up slowly and had had but little conversation, save about her little brothers, and a few words about Lord Okehampton's gout; indeed for some minutes they had been quite silent; Lady Okehampton was no talker, and all her energies had been given to the task of climbing the hill before her; until at last, out of breath, she sank upon one of the benches she found at the top. Frances stood by her and shading her eyes with her hand, looked forth at the view before her.

'Oh! mother, isn't this most beautiful? just the sort of morning and scene which makes one feel a wish to be better,—and do more worthy work in the world,' she added, half to herself.

'Yes, my child, it is most perfect, and it's a great comfort to me to think in what a little time it will all be yours; your home at least, for I'm sure I don't want poor Sir Victor to die. I daresay though, nice as we think it now, you will find plenty of improvements to make. I was telling Sir Victor last night what taste you had; and his answers were,—Her wishes shall be law. Charming man! I declare it would be worth while to marry Claude to be his daughter-in-law. Not that you take that view, I daresay,' said the mother playfully, looking up at her daughter, whose face was

however averted, and who did not answer, except to say, 'Yes, Sir Victor is very attentive.'

'Very attentive, Frances,—that is poor praise for that delightful man. True, you don't know him as I do,—such consideration and so much tact. He wants me, my dearest, to get you to name the day for your wedding some time soon; he says Claude is so shy he will not ask you himself; but he thinks, and so do I, my darling, for many reasons, that it would be well if it was to take place soon. You see your father is pretty well now, and I could attend to the *trousseau* and things very nicely. Lady Osmond has told me of some excellent shops, where, for her sake, they will work even better than anywhere else. Frances, my dear, tell me what you are thinking about, and why you don't answer?' said Lady Okehampton, putting her hand in her daughter's and drawing her towards her.

'Mother, darling,' said the girl, summoning back her wandering thoughts, 'surely we need not discuss the time yet; I am so happy to be with you a little while; let us not mar our pleasure by thinking of the separation hanging over us. Aren't you glad to have your child back again, dear; I mean to be so useful to you in the boys' holidays? I am *sure* you can't spare me.'

'Well, my dear, I don't of course want to part with

you ; indeed, all these weeks I missed you dreadfully. Ah ! there is Claude and Miss Willoughby ; what an odd girl, to be walking about with him ! I suppose he 's looking for you.'

'The temptation to see this view was too much for me, Lady Okehampton,' said the fair Helen, as she neared the seats at the top of the hill. 'Mr. Trevelyan told me he was coming to look for you and Frances, so I offered to come with him,' added she, though all the time she was turning her back to the view which she said she had come on purpose to see.

'It 's very pretty, ain't it, Frances?' said Claude. 'Those are the best coverts down there, and a safe find is in those gorses over the hill there. There are some cottages which are an eyesore, and must be swept away. What a nuisance poor people are ; always anchored somewhere in the way !'

'Oh ! Claude,' said Frances, 'where are you going to build them up again ? Do let me see the plans. I have heard a good deal about model cottages lately, and I think I could give you some useful hints.'

'Build them up ! My father has no intention of doing that, I can tell you ; they can go elsewhere—to the next parish, or to the devil, for all I care, so long as they don't spoil our best beat. Come, I know more than

you think, my dear; I know we shall lower the rates in this parish by pulling down all those beggarly places.'

'But how about raising them in the next, where you will drive them?' said Frances sadly, as she thought how differently she had lately heard these subjects treated.

'That 's no business of ours; every one for himself. But I didn't want a sermon about poor people, Frances. I want you to come and see old Nell's puppies; she has got seven, and then you could just look round the stables.'

'Very well,' said she, in a tone of chilled disappointment, which was highly refreshing to Miss Helen Willoughby, who rapturously declared that it would be *too* delightful.

Claude and his intended led the way down the side of the hill, avoiding the path, but though Miss Willoughby was an independent young woman enough under most circumstances, it was wonderful to see the amount of assistance she required. Claude was repeatedly summoned to give a hand, or say where she had better put her foot, so as to avoid slipping. Quietly and unconcernedly Frances pursued her way, wondering to herself how any girl could talk such nonsense, or fish for compliments in such an evident way as Helen did.

At last, when they arrived at level ground, Helen was perforce compelled to let the lovers alone; and so, the one man of the party being out of her reach, she made a virtue of necessity, and brought her powers of fascination to bear on Lady Okehampton, affected the keenest interest in Lord Okehampton's gout, the boys' health, and 'dear Frances,' till the gentle passive woman thought her charming, and almost began to wish that she could instil a little of Helen's liveliness into her own daughter.

How did the *lovers* get on meanwhile in their *tête-à-tête*, the first they had had for two months? No love-making took place; but then that was nothing new. There never had been love-passages between them; it was a *mariage de convenance*, settled by the parents, and accepted by both young people: by Claude, because he had done as his father listed, and certain cynical axioms had been early drilled into him, 'that, though married, he might yet retain his freedom,' and so forth; by Frances, from ignorance of what love was, and the oppression consequent on the dreary, cheerless life at home.

But whatever Claude might be, Frances was high-principled and true to him. She had accepted her cousin as her intended husband, and though she knew

she was not in love with him, she always tried to make the best of his good qualities. Feeling that her inclination pointed less than before in that direction, she determined to try and do her duty. She was more gentle in her answers, and more forbearing in her judgment than she ever had been to him. She pitied him sincerely, and yet it was a pity in noways akin to love. She felt a keen interest in the *cousin*, but none in the husband.

But she must attend and listen to him, as he boldly talked of what *we* should do,—assuming that ere the summer was over they would be man and wife. He was not unkind in anything he said; he was simply talking of plans, much as a man might who had been married some years. This tone was one that did not jar on Frances' feelings, it so well accorded with her own frame of mind. Had she inspired a feeling she did not share, it would have distressed her; therefore she was willing to talk of future movements of the battalion, of Aldershott, Shorncliffe, Windsor, which places it was likely to go to, and even showed something of interest in a plan of Claude's to go in for the course of musketry instruction at Hythe, with a view to becoming adjutant. But that was the sum of their conversation. Nearer and deeper subjects Frances

avoided, for Claude's tone was not what she had been lately used to hear, and it jarred very much on her newly developed apprehension of true refinement to find the difference between the Cossington and Castle Grange standard of life.

The conversation was stopped by their meeting with Miss Cavendish, whose brow lifted as she saw Claude and Frances walking together. With the most pointed allusions, she markedly left '*those happy young things to themselves*,' and joined herself to Lady Okehampton, rather to the relief of Miss Helen.

CHAPTER XXV.

A TRYING MEETING.

'Wait, my faith is large in time,
And that which shapes it to some perfect end.'

TENNYSON.

'SIR GEORGE HERVEY,' announced the butler to the assembled guests before dinner; and little that stately functionary knew how three hearts beat at that moment in the apparently quiet group:—The heart of the hero in question, in the first place, as he caught sight of a figure stooping low over a book of pictures in the farther corner of the gallery into which he was ushered; the heart of Frances, who was apparently intently engrossed; and the heart of Flora Cavendish, who, as her brilliant eyes met her cousin's, threw into them such an expression of admiration and love, that George Hervey must indeed have been the simple-hearted gentleman he was, not to read it in her face. Truly that evening Flora

Cavendish looked a picture of perfect beauty—sensual beauty if you will—but still of its highest kind. Every movement, every attitude, was a study, not less so than the exquisite taste of the sweeping dress that she wore, calculated to enhance every charm of her symmetrical figure. She was peerless in appearance, and she knew it.

Sir Victor advanced to greet his hitherto unknown guest with the courtesy which deceived so often, and which no one could command better than he. If we remember, as John Grimshaw and Mr. Arthurs appeared to do, some words of his in the morning, we shall better appreciate the sneer upon the face of the latter, and the muttered 'Just like him!' as Sir Victor exclaimed, 'My dear sir, this is too good of you, and what I call really kind, taking us in this way. Need I say how we are working for the one man who will be in his right place in Parliament, and who will have the courage to try and carry out all the schemes which I have only dreamt of,' and he sighed, as though the wrongs of the people and the rights of the working classes had been his study through life. 'But you have friends and relations here. Lady Okehampton, allow me—your old friend. Frances, my dear, where are you? And here, my dear sir, is my boy. Maybe

you may have heard of him from this young lady here,' he added playfully, gently laying his hand on her shoulder.

Frances knew that she blushed crimson, when she would have given very much to appear as calm as did her 'old friend,' who, though his blood seemed to rush as in a boiling torrent through his veins, took her hand as calmly as he had taken her mother's, and merely said, 'My dear, how are you? My sister sent you many affectionate messages, and told me to tell you that she missed you very much;' and then he passed on to his cousin Flora, leaving Frances with a cold feeling of pain in her heart, for which she could hardly account to herself.

But there was little time for reflection. The guests being of course distributed according to their respective ranks, at dinner Frances found herself between Mr. Nemesis Fairley and Lord Harlech, Claude, for some reason best known to himself, having contrived to fall to the share of Miss Willoughby.

Frances liked Lord Harlech. Though very indolent in all matters excepting what related to sport, he was sensible, straightforward, and sincerely attached to Claude, had helped him out of several scrapes, and had always given him the best advice; they talked with considerable energy of schools for soldiers' chil-

dren, reading-rooms for the men, and similar subjects, and Frances asked and received a good deal of useful information. Frances cared for the subjects on which he could talk to her, and could hardly attend to the long-winded questions and facts with which Mr. Fairley plied her ; his favourite subjects were his own publications, and to them he would always turn the conversation. Unfortunately Frances had not read them. What was to be done ? He offered to lend her copies. Frances bowed her thanks, and turned as soon as she decently could to her other neighbour.

George Hervey sat by Flora, and Frances little guessed that she was watched the whole time by that lady, and that as she became more animated towards the end of dinner by the interest in the topic she was discussing with Lord Harlech, that Flora Cavendish had said to her cousin—

‘ George, your little friend is having a fine flirtation with the other heir-apparent. Master Claude had better look out ; do see how she is talking ! Ah, I always heard she was a great flirt, those very quiet girls mostly are ; don’t you think so, dear ? ’ The words were not much in themselves, and she changed the subject directly ; but the woman knew the chord she had struck, and as she carelessly talked on, mingling an appearance

of affection and deference to her cousin with clever anecdotes and well-timed questions, she saw George Hervey often turn his eyes with something of impatience to the couple to whom she had directed his attention. Though he, in his simple-hearted goodness, was no match for the intriguing woman at his side, the spiteful words passed almost unnoticed, as he watched the quiet intelligence of that fresh young face opposite to him; and he could scarcely repress the sigh which rose to his lips, and which would have told Flora more plainly still, the direction of his thoughts; for, in truth, he was watching wistfully for a glance, to which his conscience yet told him he might not respond.

The dinner lasted some time, and the political conversation that followed was so long that the evening was well-nigh finished ere the gentlemen joined the circle in the drawing-room. Lady Osmond had discoursed to the gaping ladies upon the peculiarities of her nervous system and the impossibility of her being treated like any other invalid, till Lady Okehampton had well-nigh fallen asleep, and the two Willoughby girls had done so altogether, waking up only when the door opened, just in time to assume a graceful attitude, and to make room for any one they could attract to come and flirt with them.

George Hervey had not schooled himself for nothing. *He* knew the truth now. Frances was the sun in heaven to him; and he loved her with all the strength of his single-hearted nature: but she was an affianced wife, and no knowledge of his love must come to her. He said hardly anything to her, avoided all private conversation, and even sat down to play at whist,—a thing which usually he never did. All this pained and it puzzled her much; but that she heard him giving utterance to the same true and high-toned principles she had learnt from his lips, she might have thought that the man was changed. It was an extra trial coming to her in the midst of a good deal that was beginning to harass her. Poor child, she felt as if her one friend, a new friend, but not the less dear for that, was becoming lost to her.

It was with a heavy heart that Frances laid her head on her pillow.—It was with a heart well-nigh crushed with pain that George Hervey again watched through the long hours of night; vainly trying to feel interested in the address he was obliged to prepare for the following day's meeting, while ever through it, in defiance of his utmost efforts to master his thoughts, burst a consciousness which he dared not entertain and could not stifle.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COUNTY POLITICS.

'We rest, a dream has power to poison sleep,
We rise, one wandering thought pursues the day ;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep,
Embrace fond woe or cast our cares away.

SHELLEY.

'He who would gain the votes of British tribes
Must add to force of merit, force of bribes.'

SATIRE.

COUNTY meetings, nomination days, and polling days, who has not seen them, and who has not dreaded them—in these latter days especially? They are subjects in which we are but too well at home. Sir Victor Trevelyan was the great man of the neighbourhood; he had in former days stood for the county himself, and his name and interest carried many with it. Still it would be a fierce fight, and the Conservative interest was very strong. George Hervey would lose some votes from his persistent refusal to pledge himself on many subjects. He would support a Liberal

Government; but he would remain free to vote as his judgment dictated. He would stand or fall by this determination. Of course this was a line of policy that amongst the generality of constituents would be unpopular. There are those who like to think that their member is not a free agent, and many angry letters had George Hervey received from those who felt they must vote for him because they would damage their own cause if they didn't; but who had a satisfaction in entering their angry protest against what they considered so 'unconstitutional' a proceeding. What the word 'constitution' meant they hardly knew; but it sounded well, and had been used in similar circumstances before. George Hervey had a far more staunch supporter and admirer in the Duchess of Arlington than in any other of the great landed proprietors; through thick and thin she fought for him, having brought her fat little fist down on her husband's writing-table, causing the poor little man to jump half-a-yard from his chair, and scattering far and wide specimens of trichinæ that he had spent the morning in arranging, declaring that it was 'her intention to oppose the Conservative candidate as long as she had a shilling in her pocket or breath to speak,' and she had carried out her resolves. 'No independent voters for me,'

she would say ; ' franchise—fiddlesticks ! ' I 'm an old-fashioned person, and my tenants are not to think for themselves. Why, they know the terms on which they hold their farms : they vote for my friend George Hervey. I don't care about Liberal principles, that's not my plan ; I'm a Whig, my dear, and my father was a Whig before me. Bless me, it's curious if I can't do as I like with my own ; a pack of fools they 'll be if they alter the law. I vote for George Hervey because I like him, and he's a good man and a true man, and what he says he means, and what he means he carries out. I'm for principles, not party. Party indeed ! Catch him hanging up his principles like a coat upon a peg on one side of the door of the House of Commons, turning himself into a mere voting-machine.'

The Duchess for once coaxed her husband into leaving his much-loved pursuit, dragged him about the country, and obliged him to show himself with George Hervey. Once, indeed, she thought she had succeeded in making him speak in public ; but, alas ! when he looked for his notes in his pocket, he had brought instead a carefully revised paper on the habits of cheese-mites.

Of the meeting at which Sir Victor presided we shall say little. It was eminently successful, but then,

as it was a meeting of the Liberal party, that was to be expected. George Hervey spoke little, but very much to the point, earnestly and honestly. He had had a hard struggle at the very last with his inclinations. He longed now for an excuse to retire. He was sick at heart, and cared but little for the place he had once so longed to fill; but he would go on; he *must*. Was he not pledged? It was only a little more of self-sacrifice, and though he looked paler than ever as he rose to address the electors, it was attributed to a long and wearisome canvass, and little enough to the true cause.

Bets were freely exchanged upon the result of the election. The head of the opposition party had a long smooth tongue and a long purse. The constituents of the division were by no means immaculate, and from the number of places promised to the ardent admirers of Tory principles, any one might have thought that the candidate had the disposal of the patronage of the whole kingdom. The father left no stone unturned to return his son, and the money flowed freely. Both sides could reckon promises showing a clear majority, and time would show which side was right. But it is doubtful which are the most delusive, promises of votes from electors made to their would-be members, or

promises made by these would-be members to their constituents.

Frances did not go to the meeting; but when, late in the afternoon, she met her betrothed coming back from the town, she strove to extract from him an account of all that had passed. It was trouble thrown away. Claude Trevelyan could not or would not care. He said it had been 'awfully slow,' and that 'old Hervey had prosed away about nothing, and the governor about still less;' and began instead to dwell upon the 'bore it was that Flying Crusoe had broken his neck at the Paris steeple-chases.' It was hopeless; he was in one of his least amiable moods, thought poor Frances; whereas it was he that was the same, and she that was waking up to find out the uncongenial mind.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FAST YOUNG LADY.

'The steed may be sold, and the rider be done,
Unfoddered the steed, and unriden the run,
But he ne'er can forget the bright season that threw
Its enchantment around him whilst hunting with you.'

Song.

THE meet of the crack pack which hunted that country was at Castle Grange next morning, and before dawn an unusual stir might have been perceived in the stable-yard. This was soon communicated to the house. The bustle consequent upon a breakfast that was almost a public one; the running to and fro of men and women; that indescribable enthusiasm and license which seem to take possession of every class and age on such occasions, proclaimed it no ordinary day. The two Willoughby girls were to ride to cover; Mr. Arthurs, Claude, Lord Harlech, were to escort them to the cover side, as they modestly put it, and then to follow the fortunes of the day; and though Lady

Osmond had announced that in '*my*' time no gentleman dreamt of hunting, and 'it was a thing that *my* daughters never did,' it was a remarkable fact that Helen Willoughby should have come down early, and had a private conference with the groom as to 'Black Juan's' jumping powers, advisability of curb or snaffle reins, and other hunting details, and that she should have sent off to the nearest town for a strong sharp spur and a hunting-whip the night before. Many and long had been the talks with Claude on the subject, and deep her apparent interest in the various vicissitudes of the chase. Possibly hunting *foxes* was not the principal pursuit of the young lady that day, but that it was hunting we are pretty well prepared to say.

Ten o'clock found a large party in the state dining-room, and the bright red coats contrasted well with the massive oak panelling and the dull faded pictures of Trevelyan ancestors that hung on the walls. Slowly, and by twos and threes, horsemen approached the Grange; then carriages would dash up quickly, and anxious masters would inquire whether their horses had 'come on all right.' There was much drinking of cherry brandy and similar stimulants, which John Arthurs declared was the part of hunting that the present generation enjoyed the most. At a quarter to

eleven, the hounds, the master-huntsman, and whips were seen approaching, and instantly all the party became in a flutter, and the young ladies proceeded to the hall-door to mount the steeds prepared for them. Helen Willoughby required much assistance both in mounting and arranging herself in the saddle, and Claude appeared well satisfied to arrange her very short habit, and alter snaffle, and curb reins for her benefit. She was very pretty certainly; no one could deny that; and she was fully conscious that she never looked so well as she did in the saddle. Claude thought so also, and told her so, and the compliment was received without any embarrassment; she was well used to the sort of thing.

Time passed, however, and ere long all were wending their way to the covert side; the hounds had been already thrown into the gorse brake of which Claude had given so vivid a description; carriages, cars, gigs, horsemen, and horsewomen all pressing to the point whence the best view could be obtained of the place where the fox was likely to break covert. Curious it was that Claude's attention was much more absorbed by Helen than by his *fiancée*. Frances sat quietly in the carriage by Lady Osmond, and took but little heed of the scene around her. She cared so very little for anything now,

and the things which six months ago would have been intense pleasure to her, seemed wearisome beyond endurance.

However, they were not kept waiting long. It was not five minutes. A holloa from the most distant part of the wood announced that the fox had broken covert, and at the very point which had been pronounced to be the least likely. No time for ceremony; helter-skelter, away they all rushed, some following those who were supposed to be 'knowing hands;' others, after the fashion of the day, exercising the 'rights of private judgment,' soon found themselves 'pounded,' and saw and heard no more of the run—for that day at least.

'Ah, well, it was a splendid run, Miss Willoughby,' said Claude, as he handed her some tea at five o'clock in the drawing-room at Castle Grange. 'A sad pity you did not see more of it, though,' he added, and the corners of his mouth curled curiously. 'If Lady Osmond hadn't forbidden the amusement, and you had not gone in for being so obedient, I really think I could have guided you without much peril.'

'What a horrid shame to chaff me like that!' whispered the young lady. 'Do be quiet.'

'So you really lost your way, Miss Helen,' said John

Arthurs, 'your way home? Well, I don't know, but you certainly took a very eccentric way to find it again. Did you think the hounds had lost theirs also?'

'Horrid brute! I wish he'd stayed at the bottom of the ditch I saw him in,' muttered Helen. 'Anyway, I'm tired to death, so I shall depart.'

The best insight into the plans and projects of this enterprising young lady will be to follow her to her room, where we find her sister lying on the sofa, reading a new novel, which, somehow, did not seem of paramount interest, for she threw it on one side and jumped up from her recumbent position, as if expecting to hear something very interesting.

'Well, Helen, tell us all about it! Mamma's been so cross ever since I came in, that I wished I had been as disobedient as you were, and so I should, but the 'Facer' cast a shoe, so I was obliged to come home; and you'll catch it when you see mamma. She is *so* angry with you! and went into the highest and driest of her histories about the manners of the last century. But tell me, how did you get on?'

'Never had better fun in all my life!' said Helen, throwing herself on the sofa her sister had just left. 'What a fool Frances is, not to hunt, with her means, and the pick of all those horses.'

‘ But if you went on with Claude Trevelyan as I saw you beginning, Miss Helen, I should hardly think you wished for Frances’ society.’

‘ What do you mean, Mary? I’m sure Frances and I are very good friends!’ said Helen, actually with something like a blush on her face.

‘ Why, you know well enough that if Frances was the least bit in love with Claude, she would never have stood the astounding way in which you flirt with him.’

‘ And what if I do? Nobody minds, and I’m sure it’s as dull as dull can be here without a little excitement. *Raison de plus*, if Frances doesn’t care for him. Poor fellow! I think it’s an uncommon shame of Sir Victor to marry him off like that; and I can’t see that any one is made happy by the arrangement. Frances never speaks about Claude, and he can’t understand her conversation, he says. I declare I think the man is to be pitied, and he is not half a bad fellow. And fancy what a jolly place this would be to live in! He is just what I like.’

‘ Yes, Helen, and you mean to try and make him think that you are just what he likes! Never mind, I spoil no one’s sport, and Heaven knows you can fish for yourself! If I thought Frances minded, I should tell you not to go on as you do; but what’s the use?

you would not mind a bit more than I should attend to you. All's fair in love, you know, though I don't suppose you think much about love in the matter.'

'Come, come, Mary; don't scold!' said Helen, good-humouredly. 'What and if I do like Claude just a very little?'

'Nonsense; don't tell me such things! and very wrong if you did fall in love with an engaged man.'

'Then if I did, I suspect I should not be the only one in the wrong. At least I shrewdly suspect there's a man in the house considerably in love with an engaged woman.'

'What! Lord Harlech with Frances?' said Mary Willoughby, opening her eyes. 'Well, I heard Miss Cavendish saying something about it to mamma; but I didn't believe it.'

'Lord Harlech! Fiddlesticks! No; if you can't see more than that, I leave you alone. As for that old cat, Flora Cavendish, it's just like her to spread such a report. And mamma will tell Mr. Arthurs, who will talk it over with Mr. Fairley, and when they both go back to town, they will begin a nice story about it at their club. Ugh! the gossips.'

'We must dress for dinner, and not discuss this any more now; only take my advice, Helen, and leave

Claude alone. Sir Victor did not look best pleased about the hunting, I can tell you, and you won't expect him to believe that you and Claude *both* lost your ways.'

'Bother Sir Victor! Why doesn't he let his son marry to please himself?'

'Why, because you know he is like some other people I know, and likes his own way. Goodbye. I suppose you have forgotten Paul Campbell long ago?'

'Of course; how can one remember a man who has only £300 a year! Poor Paul, he was very jolly!' said the girl, with a sigh. 'Dear me! Well, sometimes I am sorry I made him so fond of me. However, I dare-

say he has got over it long ago. Mary, take my advice; never pity a man. They make most of us suffer so bitterly that it's always a comfort when one can think they get a little punishment. I am very thankful I don't "fall in love." What is "being in love," except sacrificing all ordinary enjoyment of life to an imaginary pleasure? People in love enjoy nothing, neither walking nor sleeping nor eating. Don't laugh; it's quite true! If I could I would write a book about it. No, there are people whom I have seen *in* and *out of* love, and they told me I was right. Being in love, Mary, is, for women, self-sacrifice from one end of the chapter to the other. It means this, child: living from morning

till night with one face before you, one idea in your head. It means living, when awake, with one hope in your mind. It means going to sleep, and the same face haunting you. It means sacrificing your dearest friends, your nearest relations, all your tastes and pursuits, your ambition, your society, often and often your position, for the sake of a man who prizes you only so long as he has not found out all this. Bah! my dear! *Les grandes passions, je n'en veux pas.* It's far better to let your heart rest in peace. Do you think I could not fall in love? You are mistaken if you do. It is simply that I see the misery it entails, and *I won't.* Ah, Mary dear! women would be happier with no hearts; so I hardened my heart long ago, and I mean to marry well. It's women's philosophy. And yet,' and the wayward reckless girl burst into tears, 'I would have been very happy with little Campbell. I'm a fool, *sorella mia!* Do you think mauve or scarlet will look best in my hair? I wear the maize gown. Ah, vanity and vexation of spirit. I'm tired; may I take your chloric ether, please, my head aches horribly? Ten minutes to eight; I must go.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE NOMINATION DAY.

'There is a chancery court, a king,
A manufacturing mob, a set
Of thieves, who by themselves are sent,
Similar knaves to represent.'

SHELLEY.

THE nomination day came. Frances hardly knew how entirely her heart and soul was in that election,—far more than that of the candidate himself. He had a weight of care in his heart that made him daily more and more careless of that which a year ago had seemed the goal best worth striving for.

There was a great deal of conversation, with many asides between Sir Victor, Grimshaw, and Sir George, much maligning of the enemy by John Arthurs when Sir George was present, and much laughing at him behind his back; wonderful stories of the Australian uncle who had arrived opportunely and was scattering gold and bank-notes right and left amongst the 'incor-

ruptible electors.' Sir Victor wished his party to succeed, even though he had failed when he had tried himself, and took much pains for that purpose. He cared not one rush whether or no George Hervey was the man most fitted for the place, and was altogether incapable of understanding the noble purity of principle which he brought to the field. It was a seat to be won by the Liberal party, that was all. This election for the moment distracted his attention from his own money difficulties; besides, he had extracted a promise from Lady Okehampton that she should use all her influence to have the marriage take place at once, and he felt that his difficulties would then be over. John Grimshaw meanwhile laughed in his sleeve as he saw the game the fair Helen was so manifestly playing, and thought how effectually such a game suited his purpose. The ruin that stared Sir Victor in the face should this marriage fail was a subject ever present to his mind. Should he at last be revenged for the insults of twenty years!

The sun shone brightly as George Hervey, amongst a crowd of electors, stood before the populace at the county town to ask their support, and declare his intentions. 'Ah! here was no pandering to popular opinion,' thought Frances. 'The same words, the same sentiments as I have so often listened to at Cos-

tick at the public.' Th
spared by the Australian,
vey's voice, heard patiently
soon drowned in the usual u
of the unpopular candidate.
from his own feelings by his t
bably good-tempered, he rema
yelled and hooted, and when th
say in a short and pithy speec
return him or leave him, but he
In vain the popular cries of, 'How
about the Malt-Tax?' and simila
at him. He would not pledge l
he would give a consistent su
measures as would be likely to a
happiness of the people. Beyond

The candidate on the adverse si
speech. He would promise any
Listening to him, the populace
that if he was refu-

with

the show of hands being in favour of the Conservative candidate, a poll was demanded by Sir George Hervey's friends. Perhaps the person who at that moment cared the least about the result was our hero himself. But there was no time to think. He must be up and doing. He must work hard. There was much to be done, much to attend to. Flora Cavendish contrived, by various well-concerted schemes, to be with her cousin incessantly. She would press her attention on him, would work for him whether he would or no; and when anything at all was given her to do, she would take infinite pains to let the company know she was the person who had done it;—talking as if she and Sir George were one and the same in heart and interest. Sir Victor, however, was not to be hoodwinked by so open a manœuvre. He and Arthurs, as they sat over their cigars in the smoking-room and passed in bitter review the characters which had been moving before them of late, showed that they had accurately taken the measure of her mind and purpose. She was a successful schemer, they agreed, who had not quite landed her fish, but whom they would both have backed heavily to gain her object, as they considered George Hervey a pig-headed man, with nothing but religious crotchets in his head, and concluded that the strong-minded, unscrupulous, self-willed woman would have her way.

Two days must elapse before the election—and they were days of much excitement. Frances and Sir George never met save at dinner and breakfast, and then only once sat by each other; but even when side by side, Frances could not understand why the answers she got were short, and why any allusion to Cossington days was so carefully avoided by Sir George. All this pained her very much; and again and again it was on her tongue to ask if anything she had done or said had angered him. It was the causeless change that oppressed her so heavily. Once, when he seemed to soften a little in manner, she was beginning her question, when a hand on her shoulder stopped her, and the most melodious of voices dropped these words:—

‘My dearest Miss Fortescue, for two reasons I must interrupt. Your dear mother and Claude are looking for you, and asked me to send you to the library; and also, George dear, you know I was to copy those returns by this evening, and, with all the heart in the world to work for you, I have only just time to do it.’

‘But, Flora, I am sure it does not matter. Really they are not wanted,’ said the baronet, rather impatiently.

‘How can you say so? It is like your unselfishness to spare me; but I mean to be of use to you, in spite of yourself, as of yore. Come along.’

CHAPTER XXIX.

SUCCESS.

'Man's love is of man's life—a thing apart—
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart,
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart.
And few there are whom these can not estrange.'

BYRON.

'MY DEAREST KATE,—You shall hear from no one but from me that your brother has won the stake he tried for. After all these long years that have passed over my head, Kate, I am again a member of the House of Commons. Let us hope I am a wiser, as well as a much older man. I feel the responsibility now far more than I did then; and though we have talked of success, I did not honestly think that, on the terms I could concede, these people would return me. However, here I am; and I was considerably ahead at the close of the poll. My friends worked very hard for me—no one harder than Grimshaw,—who seemed

to derive fresh energies in proportion as difficulties arose. I do not feel that I care about it as I once did, but I am sure it is good for me to go into the world again, and be contradicted a little. You spoil me too much.

‘You will wish to know something about the polling. Till the middle of the day I was a long way behind; and, indeed, I felt at one moment that Cossington and the old leather-chair would keep me for ever; but, judging from the results, I suppose that the other side brought all their voters up early, for after two o’clock I got ahead, and kept there. It was pretty quiet; but I hear that they are much disappointed, and have spent a good deal of money. One comfort is, I have not spent a shilling in the bribing way.

‘I owe much to my host, who was steady and energetic in his support. As for the Duchess, you would have laughed; nothing could exceed her zeal. Everything that such a blind partisan could do she did, much that no one but she could have thought of. But when the numbers were announced she came forward and took both my hands, and shook them till my arms ached, and, I believe, would have kissed me, if it had been anywhere else but on a platform. What a good soul she is! we owe her a great deal.



‘So now for a London life again.

‘Frances Fortescue and her mother are here. I can’t make Claude Trevelyan out; but then young ones don’t open to us old fellows. Pray God he may make her happy, poor child!

‘Think of me in your prayers, Kate. I require them now more than ever.—Always your affectionate brother,

‘GEORGE G. HERVEY.’

‘CASTLE GRANGE.

‘I leave this to-morrow.’

CHAPTER XXX.

TWO STRINGS TO A BOW.

“Why are you wandering here, I pray?”
An old man asked a maid one day.
“Looking for poppies so bright and red,
Father,” she said, “I’m hither led.”
“Fie, fie!” she heard him cry,
“Poppies, ’tis known to all who rove,
Grow in the field, and not in the grove.”

KENNY.

YES, it was over. The excitement and expectation of the election had passed away, and George Hervey had left Castle Grange as the new M.P. for the county.

Sir Victor Trevelyan’s party lingered on for a day or two; and he, who was hospitable after his kind, whatever his faults may have been, would fain have kept them longer, but by slow degrees the bulk of the party melted away. John Arthurs was the first to announce that he must go next day. ‘The poor dear Duchess of Odiham has heard I am in her neighbourhood, and

must have me come and meet a set of people whom I know. Very sorry, I am sure, to go and have my soul dried up at that dreary house, with all those bores of men and stuck-up women ; but *que voulez vous ?* Friendship has its sacrifices,' he said.

Those behind the scenes guessed rightly that Arthurs had requested Lord Caruthers, the son, to get him asked. They would have relished the Duchess's answer to him had they known it : ' O yes, the man may come. I suppose I needn't talk to him ; for if there is a man I despise, it is he.' All knew that he would go from Castle Grange with a slanderous word of every one of its guests,—a sneer at those who were good, a betrayal of those who were bad,—that no one name would pass his viperous tongue unassailed ; and yet—from August till May—John Arthurs had the run of the best houses in England.

Mr. Nemesis Fairley was the next to drop off. He declared that all the ' ological' societies in London were waiting his arrival ; that the scientific world announced itself at a standstill without him. So he departed on his way ; and the party left behind felt as if a dead weight had been removed from their atmosphere.

Lord Harlech remained for a week longer. He was fond of Claude, as men are apt to be fond of each other

with no particular reason, save that they were brother officers, and necessarily much thrown together. Lord Harlech took a fancy to Frances Fortescue, which was not in the least falling in love—at least he thought not,—and would discuss Claude's tastes and habits with her; and as for Frances, she was glad to hear anything that might give hints or advice as to the life before her.

Several times Miss Cavendish had seen the two talking together, and she had commented on it in no measured language to Lady Osmond, who would put up her eyeglass, look steadily at her informant, declaring that it really made her quite ill to think of such conduct, would say it was really more than she could tolerate, and that she should speak to Sir Victor or Lady Okehampton; till Flora, afraid she had overreached herself and said too much, would half retract, in a way which left, if possible, a worse impression than before on Lady Osmond's mind, if any mind she had.

It seems a farce to speak of Claude and Frances as lovers, and yet as lovers they were treated by their respective parents and by many others of the party, and, of course, from morn to eve thrown into each other's society as if they could not exist apart,—riding, walking, in doors or out of doors,—before meals and after meals, they were driven together by common tacit

consent. The daily ride or walk with Claude came to be looked on with dread by Frances. What was it? Was Claude altered? No. She could not say that he was other than he ever had been. Was she herself altered? She felt she was.—She felt that her mind was opened and enlarged,—she felt that what had seemed *endurable* before was daily more and more intolerable. She had once or twice timidly tried to sound Claude upon various points and opinions of deep interest to her, and which she had much considered, but all in vain, and in despair she would turn to such subjects as interested him. When night came, she would seek sleep to rid herself of her wearying thoughts. It would not come, and the poor girl lay awake hour after hour, wondering what would be the end, and what life would be with Claude; whether there was such a thing as training after marriage; whether he could be led to see things differently. ‘It was,’ she would say to herself, ‘not even as if we were desperately fond of each other, then one might hope, but I cannot think Claude cares for me.’ Then would come the crushing recollection of her promise. How far was that binding?—her word, her promised faith. How she wished she could have turned to her mother for help, but there she could not hope for

sympathy, so entirely was she possessed with the idea that she and Claude were made for each other. Seeing Claude in daily life, as Frances had lately done, she had shuddered at the sneering, mocking words of John Arthurs had woke an echo in the mouth of her betrothed. And then she would persuade herself that her word was given, and by it she must stand or fall.

Back again the thought would come, whether Claude would ever care for her, and if so, would she love him? Would he not be capable of much good if he was sincerely attached to his wife? She knew there was much that was nice in him, much of warm-heartedness, good temper, and gentlemanlike feeling, or she never would have consented to be his wife; but was that sufficient foundation for happiness? Oh, was not the daily tedium of life at Lord Okehampton's far better? Would not loneliness, banishment, and neglect be better, far better, than a loveless life with a man to whom she could not look up.

Such were Frances' hourly reflections.

What was Claude's view of life meantime? Perhaps if we imagine a few days to have elapsed, and will take a look at a pair walking in the long fir wood at the back of the park, we shall know a little more about his feelings also.

It was a very bright sunny morning, and Helen Willoughby had arrayed herself soon after breakfast in the most becoming of walking dresses, the shortest of linsey skirts, the prettiest of hats, a smart walking-stick completing her get-up. She casually passed through the billiard-room, and said she was going in search of the parsley-fern to the old fir copse. She laughed a merry goodbye to the two (Claude and Lord Harlech) who were playing, and disappeared down the hill on which the house stood. She walked some little distance, and for a young lady bent on botanical pursuits, she was singularly indifferent to the varieties of ferns which she passed on her road. Still she pressed on her way, switching the tips of the branches with the end of her stick, humming now an air in *Faust*, and now an old English melody, and laughing to herself at the thoughts that suggested themselves to her as she reviewed the 'state of parties' at Castle Grange. Once or twice she paused and turned her head for an instant back on the path she had pursued, but still she walked on. Again she turned round, but whatever she may have expected to see, not a human being was in sight. She tapped her foot impatiently and frowned, as she said half-aloud, 'Have I made a fool of myself after all? What folly!' There was a slight rustle amongst the

trees behind her, and a man sprang on to the path. Helen turned round. Need we say that it was Claude Trevelyan who stood by her side? 'You here, Mr. Trevelyan! How in the name of fortune did you get here? I thought you were safe with Lord Harlech for the next two hours,' said the young lady, with what amount of truth we will not pretend to say.

'Well, you know, you talked of ferns, Miss Willoughby, so when I had settled Harlech, I thought I would cut across the park, and show you where there are beauties, much better than these.'

'It's very kind of you. I'm very grateful, but don't let me take up your time.'

'My time could not be better employed. Come this way. Do you mind a rough path, and sometimes a dirty one?'

'Do you think, now, that this looks as if I should mind roughing it?' said Helen, putting out a tiny foot, shod with what she was pleased to call a thick boot.

'Well, it's not very business-like, but perhaps it will do. At all events, it's very pretty to see such a neat *chaussure*.'

'Nonsense, Mr. Trevelyan! Show me the way, will you?' and Helen proceeded to explain what sort of fern she was looking for, and how she meant to put it in her fernery in Belgravia. 'And then you will come and see

it when you come and see us, for I know you will be quartered quite near, in Chelsea Barracks. Ah, but I forgot,' she said, 'you'll be married, and perhaps Frances won't let you come.'

'Frances not let me come! What do you mean? Besides, I don't know when I'm to marry her, I'm sure.'

'Don't you? Why, Sir Victor was giving me every detail yesterday at fullest length, and telling me how devoted you were to her, how anxious you were to be married, and of all sorts and kinds of plans that you had made. It all sounded so bright and pleasant. Frances is a happy girl to be able to spend her life in this lovely place. I am sure she must be enchanted with it!' said Helen with a sigh, which was not altogether artificial.

'Hum. Well, if she is delighted she takes a very odd way of showing it,' said Claude gloomily. 'I can't say that it is what I should have thought. I never can get her to talk about the place or anything belonging to the horses or the kennels, or any of our last improvements; she begins about cottages, or poor people, or schools, as if she was a parson.'

'Oh, Mr. Trevelyan, you don't mean to say she doesn't delight in going to the stables with you? If it was me,' and she stopped,—'but then I am so dreadfully fond of all country things,' said Helen, as if she could have said more had she dared.

...of a tree, and turned
and the loveliest of violet eye
lashes, met his. 'I know sh
little me; but you need not
plainly, Claude—Mr. Trevelyan
very foolish and giddy, but
better. Ah me!' and the you
or other, contrived that a tear
the beautiful eyes, and hang for

Claude turned white and red b
of temptation than his weak nat
was with something more like lo
felt, that he sat down by Helen,
he said—

'How do you dare say such
Helen, darling, you are worth to m
I have known for a long time tha
love her, and now I know also th
more and more every hour of my l

'O hush, how can you say so
said, as Claude pressed his

love like this,' and she rose from the seat and turned from him, with something of dejectedness of manner, which completely overcame in Claude all recollection of Frances, and his father and his plighted troth.

'O Helen,' he said, with passionate emotion, 'what does that signify? Only tell me that you care for me, and that you will let me love you, my whole life shall be given to you. As for my marriage, I'll break it off. I will indeed. I will brave my father. Only tell me you love me, darling, and that you will share my fate.'

'How can I tell you so, Claude,' said Helen, 'when you are yet engaged? Let go my hand. No; well, and I can't help it, if you will,' and Helen stood there silent for a moment, astonished at the crisis she had brought about, which, however desirable she might have thought it in the distance, she found very difficult to manage rightly at that precise moment, for Claude gave her no time for reflection. Now that he had passed the Rubicon, and spoken out the thoughts which had been smouldering in his heart for some days, he would take no denial. He pressed Helen anxiously for an answer. 'Would she and could she love him?' Such words are not often answered by a plain 'Yes' or 'No,' and this was no exception to the rule; but whatever answer he finally obtained, it was one with which he appeared well satisfied; and little would any one who had met

... had been scrupulous
up, and that they were behavior
occurred to either of them. C
now, and Helen felt triumphant
him very well, and that she should
able for the rest of her days.

Once or twice as they neared
to them both that they might ha
scenes to go through. To do H
woman enough to know that, as
there had been no great love be
Claude, and she could comfort hers
break Frances' heart to find that
given his allegiance to another wom
—ah! that was altogether another
be thought of by either party with
of alarm. It was an anxious mome
what was best to be done, and cou
tion. Sir Victor must be told at c
hampton also, that was certain.

Could Frances have

being enacted she was undergoing slow torture during a walk in the company of Sir Victor and Miss Cavendish. Sir Victor had been talking to her in a more than usually affectionate way, and had been telling her of great improvements he meant to make on the property, and how much he hoped from her guidance of Claude and her influence over his tenants. This was very trying, but it was even worse to have the intervals in the conversation filled up by Flora Cavendish's comments and suggestions, and it seemed a climax when she began to talk of George Hervey as 'dear George,' and spoke as if nothing was done at Cossington except with and by her advice. Frances had endured; it had been a long weary walk and her spirits were at zero. She could do nothing but ponder again and again which was right—to 'break her troth,' or to give her hand without her love. They were long and fearful struggles, and the poor child had not a soul to turn to. Possibly, had she been at Cossington, the sympathy of Mrs. Drummond would have overcome her reluctance to speak on such a subject. As it was, she had to grind on alone, for to write of all this was impossible. Therefore it was that we said, could Frances Fortescue have seen the interview we have reported, her spirits would have bounded with delight.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A DEFAULTER.

‘ It is best to be merry and wise ;
It is best to be honest and true ;
It is best to be off with the old love
Before you are on with the new.’

LORD HARLECH was a little surprised when Claude came into his bedroom before dinner, and after wandering about the room a good deal, taking up most of the things on the table in an absent way, threw himself back in an arm-chair, exclaiming—

‘ I say, old fellow, I’m in a deuce of a mess, and I have come to you for a bit of help out of the hole I’ve got myself into.’

‘ What’s the matter, Trevelyan, and how can I help you? I’m sure I will, if I can. Out with it.’

As we know what had happened, we will not follow Claude through the history of his changed affections, which he then unfolded to his brother officer. He told

the facts of the case in a simple way, and then ended by saying—

‘ And now I have to face the governor, who has been looking to Frances’ money to right the property; and you know Helen hasn’t a sixpence. What am I to do to appease him? I will not give up Helen. I don’t mind poverty; you know I have a trifle of my own, enough just to save us from starving,—but as to my father, I’m afraid he is dreadfully hard up now; and it won’t be a pleasant interview.’

‘ No, indeed, it won’t, but there’s nothing for it now. You must, in justice to Miss Fortescue, speak out directly. She is too noble-hearted a girl to be angry with you, knowing, as she does, that the marriage was neither of your seeking nor of hers: and between you and me, I don’t think it will make her very unhappy, for I am sure that—without wishing to pay you a bad compliment—she is not in love with you. Do you think she is?’

‘ No; I don’t think she is. I hope I should not have been such a scoundrel as that would amount to.’

‘ I advise you also to face your fate at once. There can be no sort of good in delaying. Tell Miss Fortescue yourself first and then tell your father.’

‘ I wish I could write and tell the governor,’ said

to him;" and then
what a rage he will

'Yes, indeed, I
tell him at once. I
not pleasant; but if
work, the world would

'I will speak to him
I will see her at once.
behaved, I feel that.

and I know it; I hope
get a better husband than
Harlech, take my advice
have to do with your mother.
I've been a fool all this time
I have sacrificed Frances'
might have been married and
this cursed property. There
I shall have to work hard,
give me a good allowance, I
Lady Osmond won't help us
marriage she is

‘Think, my good fellow?—why, that you must not expect any such thing. How can I interfere in the matter? No; I’ll back you up, and help you in any other way; but you must tell your own story.’

After some more talk, which did not tend much to clear up the cloud on Claude’s brow, he left the room, and Lord Harlech was left to his reflections. Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory way in which it had been brought about, there was something after all of relief in his mind in hearing of the broken engagement. He admired Frances very much, and had always thought that she was far too superior a woman to waste her life upon his careless, empty-headed brother officer. He had never thought of falling in love with her, because there was that utter absence of all coquetry in Frances that made anything like flirtation quite impossible with her, but now he felt dimly conscious that he was relieved at the change of circumstances—why, he would have been puzzled to say at that moment, but so it was.

Was Frances Fortescue pleased when Claude came up to her after dinner, and said, ‘May I speak to you alone for a few minutes?’ She turned as pale as the white roses in her hair, and it was a frightened scared face that met his. If he had ever doubted that what

was no help. She thought
was going to make her fix
Oh! was there no escape?
bind her to certain misery—
loveless life? Which way
she to do? She followed Cla
feeling as if she was going to
He stopped, and shut the do
and then, with a deep feeling
her and stood beside her; a d
and his eyes were bent on the g
well he might, for it was a stran
say. Frances looked up, surpr
white face gave him courage
happier, at all events.

‘ Well, Claude,’ she said at la
to say to me?’ and her voice w

‘ Frances, I feel as if I w
scoundrel to speak to you, an
find words to sav what I

and to entreat your forgiveness. Hush! don't speak till you know and hear perhaps the strangest request that ever fell from a man's lips. Frances, will you give me back my plighted word?—will you give me my freedom? I have broken faith with you, for I love another woman, and have told her so. No; listen, Frances!—hear me to the end. I feel as if I deserved your bitter scorn, and I have no excuse to make for myself. I would never have asked this had I thought I could make you happy. You know I could not do it, Frances. Tell me, dear, that you forgive me;' and Claude leant his head on the chimney-piece, and sighed with a heavy sigh that seemed unnatural in one who was usually so light-hearted and careless. The sigh came from his feeling of self-abasement.

Moment by moment had the colour been deepening on Frances' cheek as she listened to the extraordinary request of her promised husband, when he paused in very shame and self-reproach. 'Thank God!' were the only words that passed her lips for some minutes, and she shook from head to foot. She could hardly realize that it was her freedom that was given back to her, and her vanity might have been mortified had she had time to think. Her first feeling was one of intense relief; her next, that a man who could have acted thus, was one to whom it would indeed have been misery to be

bound. Still she could not feel quite blameless ; therefore, with an affection and gentleness unusual in her manner to him, she took his hand and said, ' Dear Claude, I am glad you are braver than I am. I knew we were not suited to be more than cousins, and I have been too great a coward to say so. Yes ; I am very thankful. We could not have been happy ; and, Claude, I know your mind is full of self-reproach ; and I am honest enough to tell you that people will condemn you. But I am so thankful ;' and she burst into tears. ' I was not fitted to marry you. I do not feel as if I could ever have made your home happy. Claude, don't blame yourself so much. Indeed I forgive you. We have both been very wrong to have let others influence us as we have done, but we must be brave now,—I will help you ; and believe me that for ever I will look on you as the dear cousin you used to be long ago. I think I need not ask who it is you love ? I hope she will make you happier than ever I could. Dear Claude, do not look so miserable. But you must be quite open now : if I do not object, or say you have behaved ill, no one else shall. Let us say it is by mutual agreement, and it will help you much. I am sure it is. It is a sorry business we have made of the whole thing, but let bygones be bygones. I will do all I can with my mother and your father.

Claude, thank God that we found out the truth in time. Come, look up! don't be so wretched. I know you want to tell me about it all, but I must not wait now. Tell' your father this evening now at once, and trust me. I could take the whole *onus* on my own shoulders, but that would not be true or honest. But depend upon it I will help you, and this is a lesson of life we can never forget; don't let it pass from your heart; don't ever again be weak enough to do what you feel is wrong, because you haven't moral courage to face some difficulty. I am speaking for myself quite as much as for you. O Claude, I am very thankful to think that this sad portion of our lives is finished. God bless you! We will remember always we are cousins. I'll tell my mother too. Poor Lord Okehamp-ton won't get rid of me after all.'

Frances went straight to her own room, threw herself on her knees, and thanked God for the light that had come to her path, for the freedom that she had recovered, and for all she felt she had been spared of misery. She prayed long and earnestly—prayed that her life might yet be of some use, that she might learn to bear the little crosses of life at home more patiently; and as she went back to the drawing-room, she said to herself, 'After all, in life's work, it is not so much "*what you do as how you do it*" that signifies.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

BEARDING THE LION.

‘The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.’

Henry VI.

‘Stay, my lord,

And let your reason with your choler question

What ’tis you go about.’

Henry VIII.

THERE are few things in life more curious to watch than the apathetic manner in which people seemingly pursue its daily events,—eat, drink, laugh, and talk, whilst their hearts are entirely absorbed by other things—how when a soul is torn with deepest emotion, one may see the veriest trifles apparently engrossing the attention of the person so suffering; how the same rule applies equally to all passions: ambition, love, jealousy, or maybe anger, raging in individuals who all the while may seem entirely occupied with the circumstances of the hour.

Such is life, and such was life at Castle Grange

that evening. The party assembled behaved as if nothing unusual had happened; and yet three of them had seen one of the greatest changes that can happen in life pass over their heads that day—Claude, Frances, and Helen; and yet this particular evening passed exactly like its fellows, whilst music and tea and conversation filled up the time as usual. There was nothing to attract attention; and little did Sir Victor think of the storm that would take place in that very room ere he sought his pillow. Grimshaw was still an inmate, and had been inwardly chafing all the evening at the wording of an invitation of Sir Victor's to his son, conveyed pretty much in these terms—

‘By the way, Grimshaw, I saw that son of yours hanging about your house. You may tell him that if he likes he may go into Spratt's copse and pick up a few rabbits. The keeper will shoot them if he doesn't.’

Insults such as these were ever fresh fuel added to the injuries of former days. None of them were forgotten.

Time wore on, the ladies left the room, and the men of the party dropped off one by one, Lord Harlech, as he left, giving Claude a look which might be thus interpreted: ‘Screw up your courage, and out with

it.' The butler came in and extinguished sundry lamps and candles, and still Claude lingered. Sir Victor had been reading the *Times*, and had taken no heed that his son, contrary to his usual habits, remained in the room. Claude turned over the leaves of the *Edinburgh Review*, and glanced from time to time at his father in an anxious, nervous way. But the leaders were interesting, and Sir Victor did not give sign of attending to anything else. Claude coughed; still his father read on. Then he got up and moved nearer the fire, within a few yards of where the elder gentleman was sitting, but the reader remained engrossed. There was no help for it. Claude felt he must speak; he could bear waiting no more. A vision of bright blue eyes, and the feeling of a hand that had but lately clasped his with a heightened pressure, came across him to strengthen him. Then, seeing the tray the servants had left there, he filled himself a glass of brandy, tossed it off, and nerving himself with this fictitious strength, went up to Sir Victor, and putting his hand on his chair, began: 'My dear father, are you very busy, or can you spare me ten minutes' conversation?' When he had got so far he felt he should have been glad if the floor had opened, and the earth swallowed him up.

Sir Victor looked up: 'Holloa! Claude, you here! Well, what have you got to say, my boy, that won't keep till to-morrow? Something about the shooting, I suppose? Of course, I know it's infernally bad! But what more can I do, when every soul is a poacher all round? Upon my word it's too bad!'

'No, father, it was not exactly about the shooting that I wanted to talk now. It was about my marriage.'

'Hey!' said Sir Victor, putting the paper down, and sitting up in his chair. 'Oh, of course, I can attend to that. Well, I hope it will not be long now before you are made a happy man. I had a bit of talk with my lady, and she seemed to think the beginning of June would do nicely; and as for Frances, you ought to know best whether that time will suit her.'

'Ah, it's exactly about Frances I want to speak, my dear father. I have been thinking about the matter for some time; and though I am afraid you may not approve of what I say, I think I ought to be open, and tell you that I do not think Frances and I care enough about each other to be happy as man and wife; and that, though I like her very much as a cousin and a friend, that—that'—and the young man paused for a word. The pause was of no duration,



ing about? What

'Why, simply that Fortescue; and that growing desperate in that she doesn't care with an engagement liking; but I am convinced her as well as to my reasons.'

'How can you dare to know you are engaged to must and shall'

'I must not and shall not there was nothing else but the question, I might have other woman who loves me, my wife. I love—'

'You young scoundrel!' choking with rage.

'Take care, Sir V...

engaged to Frances; but circumstances brought an explanation about, and Miss Helen Willoughby—'

'Helen Willoughby! that minx, that penniless adven—'

'Hold, hold, sir, or by heaven, my father though you be, you will rue such words,' said Claude, maddened by the word that would have been applied to his new love. 'I love Helen, and she loves me. I am of age, and you, even you, can't bully me into a marriage distasteful to me in all ways, especially since I know that I might be happy with another woman.' And Claude paused for breath.

'Very well, very well, sir, then all I can say is go, and my curse go with you. You will be a beggar, a pauper, and so shall I. But that matters not to you, ungrateful, unnatural son! Not one shilling shall I leave you; and the property is mortgaged beyond all redemption. Now you know the truth. You will leave this house, of which I am yet master, and you will never enter it as long as I am alive. That will be your sentence. I will not speak to Miss Fortescue; and you shall tell your own disgraceful story. As for that woman Helen, she and her vile intriguing family must leave my roof.' He paused for breath, and his son rejoined—

your given word than to ent
human beings.'

Sir Victor deigned no kind c
fectly stunned by the announ
son to be well-nigh as obstina
long seen there was no love to
and Claude. For the moment,
dwell on the ruin that' stared him

Claude paused for an answer,
father's manner: he might as we
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tating way, hoping against hope
recalled; but Sir Victor turned h
and with a curse loud and deep
an arm-chair.

Truly his was no enviable posit
stunned with the blow he had just
use thinking; he felt he was a rui
a beggar for life, ruined irretriev
he could sell had been
over

they could not be kept any longer, and the mortgagees would inevitably foreclose. A small wonder that he sat there so still and deathlike, for now that he was alone he had not even strength to swear. He groaned in utter misery. Wild thoughts of suicide came across him; he felt as if madness itself would be a relief. The most curious fact was the way in which all his affection for his son disappeared. He had hitherto had that *one* soft point in his hard character. The moment the interests of father and son ran counter to each other, the father's selfishness overbalanced everything else in the mean ungenerous heart.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet. There was Grimshaw. People said Grimshaw was rich. Grimshaw was his servant; Grimshaw would help. He rang the bell with a violence that left the handle in his hand. The astonished butler arrived expecting to find that something was on fire.

'Tell Mr. Grimshaw I want him.'

'I think, Sir Victor, that Mr. Grimshaw has been in bed some time.'

'Fool! did I ask you what you thought?' said the baronet, with a passion that the butler could not understand. However, in his rage, he had just sense enough to remember that if he had a favour to ask of a man it

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John Grimshaw, the agent had been employing an hour or many so employed—in ascertaining the care and the most rapid attentions, and debts of his master, and proper work for the man or fully done; every figure, every there; the strictest scrutiny was a shilling; debtor and creditor, was a miracle of tidy, systematic Grimshaw.

his pen carefully, and smiled at the rows of figures before him ; they were hardly such as would have caused a smile on the face of most men of business in relation to their client's affairs. But there were the figures—resources of all kinds, £5000 ; liabilities, interest of money borrowed, and charges of various kinds, £36,000. Yes, the figures were incontrovertible, and the agent gazed at them and took a pinch of snuff, and poked the fire. ‘At last,’ he said, ‘at last he is in my power. Ah, Dobbs and Co., Morris and Son, Tilney Brothers, all, all represented by John Grimshaw, the man of business, the slave, the dog, who was always to find money, to hear his family treated with scorn, to have no pride, no feeling, to receive nothing but contempt ; and I have my revenge at last in my hands, and the worm has turned. It must answer,’ he said ; ‘even the marriage cannot take place now in time to hinder the *exposé*, the shame, for it must come at once. Hush ! what was that ?’ and the lawyer started as a knock was heard, and with a hurried movement the papers were covered.

‘It’s me, Grimshaw, my good fellow,’ said Sir Victor. ‘Not gone to bed, I see. I’m come to smoke a cigar with you. Have one ?—they are real puros. But perhaps you prefer a pipe ?’ he said rather scornfully, un-

able even when he came to ask a favour to refrain from the arrogance he must ever show to the dependant.

‘I want to talk to you a bit,’ said the baronet, shading his eyes with his hand, and turning the arm-chair, into which he had thrown himself, with its back alike to the light and to Grimshaw. ‘The truth is that, what with all this business at the election, besides the bother of having people in the house, I’ve never a moment to call my own, and now I find I must speak about business which I have delayed from day to day.’

Grimshaw’s eyebrows lifted slightly. What was coming next? he thought.

‘My good fellow,’ said the patron, puffing a whiff of smoke leisurely into the air, ‘there are no secrets between us. I’m in a great perplexity as to what to do. You know better than I do how we are situated about the property, how counter everything has run for me, how unfortunate my speculations have been, how hard up we are for money. It’s no use mincing the matter, and I won’t pretend to try and make out things better than they are.

‘I’m afraid they *are* rather bad, Sir Victor, and that money is scarce.’

‘Ah, well, it’s a dreadful thing to come into a property and not have it clear, and you know how embar-

rassed this was, but that's neither here nor there. Grimshaw, we have always been friends, and I look upon you as one of the family, and now I am still further embarrassed by circumstances that have occurred to-day, and which make me wish more than ever for your advice and assistance. I am going to tell you what I have only just heard, and what I am sure will grieve and surprise you as it did me. My son, Mr. Trevelyan—('Confound the young idiot!' added Sir Victor to himself)—has found occasion to break off his engagement to Miss Fortescue; and this blow has fallen on me like a thunderclap.' Here Sir Victor could no longer sustain the dignity of the communication, and lapsed into his usual manner. 'Upon my soul, Grimshaw, I can't tell what to do. It's cruel work, when here I have been toiling for years managing and planning to get this rich wife for him.'

John Grimshaw for once was taken aback. He sat speechless for some moments at the suddenness with which that which he could have most wished for had come on him.

Sir Victor, with the natural selfishness of his character, paid no heed to his silence, but sat reflecting on the next subject he had to broach. At last he collected his thoughts, and with a 'Well?' he looked round at

the astonished agent. Grimshaw felt he must say something.

‘I am indeed terribly shocked, sir. I hardly know what to say,’ and in truth he did not. ‘But is this really a fact?’

‘A fact, man. Do you suppose,’ said Sir Victor angrily, ‘that I should invent such a cursed piece of folly? No. You know my son; he has chosen to fall in love with that daughter of Lady Osmond Willoughby, a girl without a shilling, and has broken with Miss Fortescue; that’s what he has done, the fool; that’s what I came to tell you; that’s what is coming to us,’ added the angry father, regardless of his dignity, or of the tone which he had till now preserved in the conversation. He was for the present moment a man in hopeless difficulties, and that was all.

Meanwhile, during these few moments of conversation, Grimshaw had run his mind over the position, and had come to the conclusion that *help* must be what Sir Victor had come to ask. Now was his moment. The triumph had come. Should he speak at once or delay? He was a man of quick perceptions, and could rapidly see the field before him. What would be the consequence of declaring himself? Which was the wiser course? to lead his victim yet further into the toils, if

possible, or to declare himself now, now, at this very moment? If Sir Victor's ruin was proclaimed at once, he felt that Frances, who was of age, and in full possession of her large property, was just the girl to come forward,—to come forward all the more because she had been ill-treated by Claude, and to offer all help and assistance to Sir Victor Trevelyan; and he knew Sir Victor well enough to know that he was a man who would accept such aid even from a woman; besides, as we said long ago, he had a glimmering idea in his head of the feeling of Flora for Sir George Hervey, as well as of the affection of the latter for Frances. Would it not be at all events a heavy blow to Flora to find that Frances was free?

All this passed through his mind like lightning. He decided. He would wear the mask yet a little longer, till the broken engagement became known; till Helen, upon whose nature he well calculated, should, on her part, have so riveted her chains as to leave Claude no chance of escape; till Frances was away and no rumour of the matter could reach her. Yes, he would wait; and when Sir Victor, in a far different manner and tone from that with which he generally addressed 'my agent,' began, 'My dear Grimshaw, I have treated you like one of the family, and I have told you all, and now I want

you to give me all the help and advice you can. I feel that nothing will alter my son's determination—ungrateful young fool. Well, he must take his own line. He must lie on his bed as he makes it. But you must help me with these Jews. Let us make a fight. I know something must go. Grimshaw, you are a richer man than most of us,' and the baronet assumed a cajoling voice, 'can you help me with a few thousands?'

It boots not to continue the conversation. Grimshaw promised his help, and Sir Victor added another weight to the load that was sinking him deeper and deeper in the hopeless complication of his affairs.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MISREPRESENTATION.

‘Whispering tongues can poison truth ;
And constancy lives in realms above ;
And life is thorny, and youth is vain ;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.’

COLERIDGE.

‘O my best sir, take heed,
Take heed of lies ; truth, though it troubles
Some minds that are both darksome and dangerous minds,
Yet it preserves itself, comes off pure, innocent,
And like the sun, though never so eclipsed,
Must break in glory. O sir, lie no more.’

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

GEORGE HERVEY was sitting with his sister at breakfast at Cossington, and discussing with her the plans for the summer. He must go up to town at once to take his seat in the House of Commons, and, of course, he must remain in town for the session. He did not much look forward to that or to anything ; he had been settling with Mrs. Drummond that she should

not go up to town till after Easter. She did not wish to go at all, but with her high, keen sense of duty, had determined to forego her own taste for quiet and for retreat in the country, and to go up and do the honours of her brother's house in London. She saw that he was out of spirits, and that he did not seem to recover as she had expected from the anxiety of the election. It made her uneasy; he had wont to be so calm and happy. What was it? They discussed the various arrangements necessary for his absence. At last Mrs. Drummond rose to leave the room, just as the post came in; and saying, 'Ah, there are plenty of letters; these and the *Times* will keep you occupied whilst I finish my work,' she left the room.

George Hervey turned over his letters idly; they did not look interesting; however, he opened them one by one as they came, casting the while rather longing glances at the newspaper, as it was duty, not inclination, that made him read his correspondence first. At last he took up one that had an elaborate scarlet monogram, and directed in a handwriting that he knew very well. Little cared he for the cousin whose attentions were thus continually showered on him, but his eye had caught the post-mark, 'Castle Grange,'—Castle Grange, where he knew that she he loved so deeply

was living, she of whom he imagined he never now allowed himself to think, but whose face was ever before his eyes, but of whom he never spoke. Will the sternest critic venture to cast the first stone, if his thoughts turned to her with an unconscious longing that *she* had thus had the right to address him? As he read his colour changed again and again. To account for this we must look over his shoulder and read the letter, which was thus worded:—

‘ CASTLE GRANGE, *Wednesday*.

‘ MY DEAREST GEORGE,—I have been intending to write to you for some days past, to inquire about your plans, and to find out when you and dear Kate think of going to town; but we really have had such dreadful scenes here, and I have been so pained by all I have witnessed, that I had not the courage to write. However, as what has happened cannot remain a secret, it is well that you should hear it from me and not from a stranger. Dear George, your tender, kind nature, I am sure, would have been pained at the way in which your *protégée*, Miss Fortescue, has behaved. (It only shows that one must not be taken in by these innocent-mannered young ladies.) Well, in three words, what has happened is this: Frances Fortescue has broken off her engagement with Claude Trevelyan, and though there is some absurd

story of a flirtation of his with little Helen Willoughby, why, even you know what that means. You will, I daresay, hear it said that it is by mutual consent, but I saw the whole thing. Well, all this is sad enough; still, a girl may change her mind; but fortunately I have seen a little more than most of them here, and I know that Frances is anxious to secure Lord Harlech, and she is just the kind of girl not to give the world a chance of saying she flirted with him, so she breaks off her engagement, and leaves the sinking ship. By the way, I had forgotten to tell you, that Sir Victor is furious with his son, and there are strange rumours of difficulties in which he is placed. Claude is gone, and the Willoughbys, of course, are gone. Frances and Lady Okehampton left directly; they are gone to London, to St. James Square, I believe—in pursuit of the young peer, of course.

‘I am quite sorry to write what I am sure gives you pain, as anything must which lowers one’s opinion of a person to whom one has been kind.

‘I don’t hear any news. Henry is very much occupied with a plan for draining Pad-moor, and he wants you to get a day and come over. I go home to-morrow. Do come and see us before you leave for London.

‘Of course, I am congratulated on all sides on my cousin’s success. The next best thing to being clever one’s-self is to have clever relations. Write to me at home, and believe me, dearest George, always affectionately yours,

FLORA.’

It was a cruel letter, cruel and false ; but of the falsity George Hervey knew nothing. He said to himself he did not believe it. It could not be that his idol, she whom he thought simplicity and truthfulness itself, could be so faithless ; and yet here were the words of an inmate of the house, his own cousin, who, as he thought, could have no object in what she said, except one of friendship, and a wish to spare his feelings by softening the heavy bitter blow. There was a footstep outside ; instinctively he crushed the letter in his hand, and turned from his sister as she entered. She should not see that letter. Even though Frances was so cruelly wrong, he would not be the one to blazon it abroad ; and for the first time in his life he withheld his confidence from his gentle sister. It was a mistake which brought much sorrow to him. She would have read the riddle, and at all events could have set in a truer light part of the circumstances which Flora had so fearfully garbled. He went forth to

his daily work, and went steadily through it, but with the thought in his heart that he had been weak and selfishly absorbed with his own feelings not to see what was likely to happen at Castle Grange, and not to have helped 'his child,' as he still called her. He did not believe her to be mercenary; to that he never gave credence; but he felt that, in like manner as Frances' engagement had not prevented his loving her, even so she might have forgotten her engagement and loved another man. He could not bear his idol to fall from its shrine, and though he was bewildered and almost stunned by the view of her conduct so falsely suggested to him, he could not allow himself to believe it, but clung in agony of affection to her image.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

UNMASKED AT LAST.

‘And what security maintains
Their right and title.’

Hudibras.

DAYS passed on. Castle Grange was untenanted save by Sir Victor and the man of business. Claude Trevelyan was in London, and the world had been made aware of three facts: His father had as good as turned him out of doors; he was off with his old love; and he was very much on with the new. For the time being he was desperately in love. Helen, who knew nothing of money except how to spend it, laughed at the rage of Sir Victor, accepted Claude's beautiful presents with the sweetest of smiles, rode with him, walked with him, and was radiant with success and happiness. That she had behaved in a way that ought to have made her thoroughly ashamed of herself never entered her head. All was fair in love she would

laughingly say, and would add, what was true enough, that there had been really no love in the case in Claude's first engagement. She pooh-poohed the idea of Sir Victor continuing to quarrel with his son, and, in short, made up her mind that things would turn out as she liked; went into fits of laughing at the idea of Claude earning money, and coaxed Lady Osmond into ordering a *trousseau* that would have been fit for a Duchess. The marriage was to take place immediately, and the young people were to live on Claude's allowance and pay. Of what this meant Helen had no more idea than a baby. But it is not with this self-willed couple that we have to do. They have made their own selfish wills and passions their masters, and they must buy their experience of life. Every sin brings its punishment sooner or later in one shape or another, and their case proved no exception to the general rule.

Meanwhile the crisis had arrived at Castle Grange, and if we will convey ourselves there on the morning of Lady Day we shall see how the first part of John Grimshaw's revenge was carried out.

Sir Victor was sitting by himself in the stately dining-room; he had quarrelled with his only son, and he was alone in the world. His reflections were not cheerful as he looked forth from the windows down the glades

of the Park, which was beginning to wear its first spring aspect of beauty. He cared not for nature even in its fullest richness; it touched neither his heart nor his senses. He stood there gazing on the view, with a feeling of cynical dislike to every human being. Suddenly the door opened and the butler appeared, and said in a hesitating voice, 'Mr. Grimshaw's compliments, and he wishes your presence in the business-room, sir.'

'Grimshaw has sent for *me*! You are mad, Tilney,' said Sir Victor, really thinking what he said. His astonishment was so unbounded that it checked the outbreak of passion which such a proceeding would otherwise have called forth.

'No, sir; Mr. Grimshaw has five gentlemen with him,—some of those London gentlemen, sir,' said the butler, in a voice that implied he knew more of the nature of the matter than he said.

'Confound it! I suppose he's afraid to trust them alone for some nonsensical reason of his own. Well, I must humour the dolt; I'll come. Grimshaw must be cracked, I think;' and lighting a cigar the baronet proceeded leisurely to the business-room.

It was a walk which would occupy some minutes. He went down the long galleries, through suites of drawing-rooms, and along the Etruscan corridors, in a

meditative mood, gazing at the pictures, bronzes, and sculptured gems which he had collected with so much care, looking at them in an absent way. Once he stopped on his journey; it was before his son's picture, painted when he was a laughing happy child of four years old. It had been a marvellous likeness in its day, and it was ridiculously like the young guardsman now. For once in his life Sir Victor sighed a bitter heavy sigh, a sigh given partly to the absent son; the son he had banished in his mad rage, but much more to the failure of his deeply-laid and long-concerted schemes. There he was now, he thought, quite alone; of what avail the luxuries which surrounded him? But the subject would not bear reflection. Sir Victor Trevelyan passed on; and catching sight of himself in a mirror reaching from floor to ceiling, he marvelled at the worn and aged figure that met his gaze. Ah, yes, he thought he was getting on in life, and what had he to look to? What would be his old age alone in that sumptuous palace; alone, when he had meant his grandchildren to grow up around him, and had looked forward to a possible peerage--long his ambition,—and which he hoped might be bestowed on him as the reward of many years' services given to the Government. He could not bear his own

thoughts. Grimshaw and the accounts were better than this. He must go up to town and get away from these gloomy fancies. What was the day of the month?—the 25th. Ah! were not many of the bills he had drawn, and which Grimshaw had indorsed, due on that day,—they must be renewed, for the rents would go to the mortgagees. However, he whistled as he went along, and paused a moment ere he turned the handle of the door opening into the business-room. He must go in, if it was only to ask Grimshaw why the butler had brought such an insane message. He opened the door, having paused to re-light the cigar, which during his meditations had gone out; but the cigar dropped from his mouth, and he started with unutterable surprise at the sight which met his gaze on entering the room. At the table sat John Grimshaw with his hat on; which hat he made no pretence of removing when his patron entered. Six men were in the room seated round the table, which was covered with a green baize cloth, and on it lay two piles of parchment unfolded and arranged so that the titles of each could plainly be discerned; a pewter inkstand stood in the middle, some fresh pens, and a quire of paper lay beside it. This arrangement surprised Sir Victor, as we have said,

but it as yet conveyed no idea of the scene that was going to take place. He looked at the agent, who had simply bowed his head in recognition, and after an instant's pause, during which the men seated at the table looked at each other with significant expression, the baronet said—

‘ Grimshaw, what the deuce is the meaning of all this, and what on earth made you send for me to come amongst all these frowzy parchments and these people? Why don't you settle things for me? You know what to do better than I do. What's the use of paying a fellow for being one's agent if one's to be bothered about every trifle? What on earth do you want with me?’

‘ Sir Victor Trevelyan, I sent to request your presence in this room to settle an old score, and to request you to overlook these, the accounts of the estate, debtor and creditor.’ And Grimshaw put his hand first on one and then on the other of the two heaps of parchment in front of him. ‘ Sir Victor Trevelyan, one of these gentlemen is an accountant, another is *my* man of business. One is, as you know, Mr. Booth, managing clerk for Messrs. Gillander, your bankers’, and the three others are the mortgagees upon the distant part of the estate. I represent the mortgagees upon this house and the surrounding estate, upon which I have had the

greatest pleasure in lending you £50,000 during the last ten years. Sir Victor Trevelyan, Mr. Booth will show you your account at the bank. Mr. G. Smith has submitted this summary of your affairs to me. I will read it :—

Income from West Danbury property, . . .	£9,000
Income from Slopesbury,	4,300
Income from Hawksmill,	2,060
Income from Castle Grange estate,	3,000
	<hr/>
	£18,360

It is condensed, as you see, to save time ; but of course you will examine it. Here is the debtor side :—

Interest of mortgages on West Danbury estate, . .	£9,600
Interest of mortgages on Slopesbury,	3,350
Interest of mortgages on Hawksmill,	2,000
Interest of mortgages on Castle Grange,	2,960
	<hr/>
	£17,910

In addition to any demands for arrears and for sums due under your notes of hand, the interest on all these mortgages is due at midsummer ; and perhaps you will remember some papers I gave you at Christmas, and which you threw on one side, and declined to read ? They were, sir, the notice—the legal six months' notice of foreclosing at midsummer. And I think, Sir Victor,

that three months will hardly be too long for you to settle your plans, for I mean to take possession in July, as I shall have friends coming to me at that time.'

He paused, and looked up. He had not done so before, and had read through the statement as though it had been the most ordinary bill of fare he was presenting to his late master.

He met Sir Victor's gaze. The blanched face and terrified bewildered expression awoke no compassion. Grimshaw felt his hour of triumph was come. Could he not make the proud man suffer yet more? Was it come at last—his vengeance—his long-looked-for vengeance; was it sweet, was it very sweet? Sir Victor remained speechless, save for the one word 'fiend,' which he hissed from between his pale lips. John Grimshaw continued, turning to the other men—

'Gentlemen,—You have for some years been my instruments, working for me blindly and in the dark. I do not suppose that anything I can say will make you think well of me, and yet I hold to giving you an explanation of what may seem black ingratitude in my conduct.

'Gentlemen,—For ten years I worked for Sir Victor Trevelyan with my whole energies, and with a determination to free the property I had found so encum-

bered. Was I thanked? I trow not. I bore it all patiently. Was I not the slave, the drudge, the despised man of business? I had the treatment that a dog would not have borne; and then came the one insult I could not stand. I had a son I loved as much as the great man loved his spoiled darling: he was to be at the young master's beck and call even as the father had been. But one day my boy came to me covered with bruises from head to foot. The young tyrant had wreaked his vengeance on his unoffending humble companion. I would have borne for myself what I could not stand for my child. I said nothing then, and years, long weary years, have passed over my head since then; the sharpness of this sting even time and kindly treatment might gradually have soothed, and perhaps altogether removed, had not every word, every act of this proud man from that day to this kept alive and added fuel to the burning sense of wrong which rankled in my heart. But this moment I take my revenge.'

Before he had finished speaking the last word he looked up, but he did not reap the enjoyment of witnessing Sir Victor's discomfiture. The baronet had left the room without one word. He had yet enough of pride in him to forbid his letting the agent see how he was crushed. He left the room well-nigh a beggar,

but he bore the blow till he got to his room; then he sank on the nearest chair, and for hours sat alone in an agony of mind that few can picture. He was physically strong; he had no fit—no fainting. Nothing was in his heart but the feeling of annihilation—the sense that he was suffering. But as for any thought that this was punishment come to him for his hard worldly life, of that he had none. There he sat, knowing that he was ruined, and that his son was well-nigh beggar for life. ‘Claude! Claude!’ he exclaimed in agony, ‘you could have saved me and spared me this. Curse the woman!’

His valet came in, and moved noiselessly about the room.

‘Any orders, Sir Victor?’ said the man, knowing as well as his master everything that had happened.

Sir Victor sprang to his feet.

‘Pack my things. I’m going to town by the mail.’

He went; and to that home of his youth he never returned again. A month more saw the auctioneer’s hammer at work. The halls, where soft words had been spoken and bright women had smiled,—whence all appearance of aught save luxury and self-indulgence had been carefully banished, during the many years of Sir Victor’s selfish life,—these halls now echoed to rough voices of picture-dealers, money-lenders, brokers, and

workmen. Sir Victor saw nothing of this. After a consultation with the London lawyers, who proved to him that nothing could be done to avert the sale and possession coming into the hands of John Grimshaw, then his sole and only object being to kill thought and time, with the inherent selfishness of his disposition, he retired to Homburg. What was it to him that his son was living on his pay and the miserable pittance he possessed of his own? Claude had brought it on himself. The one soft point in Victor Trevelyan's character was gone. He no longer cared even for his son. The gambling-table was his resort day and night; and though he seemed penniless he contrived to stake small sums, sometimes winning enough to last him a week, and sometimes losing; he who had been born heir to a princely heritage vegetated, or rather went to decay, in the company of broken-down, worthless, scheming adventurers. But enough of him. Sir Victor Trevelyan has been a dark shadow in our picture of life. He passes from it, and we will follow him and his fortunes no more, but turn to those on whom interest may be more satisfactorily spent.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DULNESS AND DIGNITY.

‘Thou cam’st not to thy place by accident ;
It is the very place God meant for thee,
And shouldst thou there small scope for action see,
Do not for this give room to discontent,
Nor let the time thou owest to God be spent
In idly dreaming how thou mightest be.’

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

‘Peter was dull—he was at first
Dull—Oh, so dull, so very dull.
Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed,
Still with this dulness was he cursed.
Dull—beyond all conception—dull.’

SHELLEY, *Peter Bell the Third*.

COULD anything on earth be more monotonous and dreary than the stately dulness of Warnborough Court? No one went to stay there who could avoid it, and those who did experienced during their stay a weight of oppression that left them with the feeling that, however humble their own position in life, nothing could induce them to accept fortune on the condition of leading such an existence as that which the

fancies and whims of Lord Okehampton entailed on his family. The state of the establishment was little short of that of royalty, and rules and regulations prevailed to a stultifying degree; the very servants could not endure it, and though it was an acknowledged fact amongst them, that such beer, beef, and board-wages were nowhere else to be found, even these advantages paled before the hopeless monotony of the life. It was the quintessence of dulness. The park walls were higher than prison walls, the gates were kept locked, and admittance given to no one save on business. Pleasure was beside the question; no one went for pleasure to Warnborough Court: three miles of drive along a park remarkable only for the fact that nothing would persuade the trees to grow,—a park which was a green flat enclosure of large extent, and that was all. The house was red brick, a structure that looked like nothing but a county lunatic asylum broken loose and gone astray; it was perfectly square, three storeys high; small windows, far apart, with the smallest of panes; it was very large: and it was said one hundred beds might be made up at any moment. True it was that, since Lord Okehampton had been in possession, it had never seen more than three or four guests at a time. The reception-rooms were large, and filled with furniture in

brown Holland covers and chandeliers in bags, rooms through which the housekeeper walked once a day with a couple of attendant housemaids; which ordeal the housemaids seldom could endure for more than three months, but would rather leave their places, declaring nothing should induce them again to enter 'high families.'

As for the three rooms in which the family lived during nine months in the year, the drawing-room and dining-room were furnished in yellow satin, and chairs, tables, and cabinets were all in the taste of the first empire. There was not a table that did not look as if it had Don Quixote's legs; not a glass that did not reflect a green and black reflection of the depressed figure that stood in front of it; not a picture but of ancestors if possible more dreary and grim than Lord Okehampton; not a chair that you could imagine had ever had the merit of possessing stuffing. The windows, like those of every room in the house, were high, reaching well-nigh to the chest of any one who tried to look out, and were set deep in the solid brickwork of the house. These rooms were raised upon a basement storey, and the view from the windows was into a Dutch garden, alternately decorated with clipped yews and statues, on which no staff of gardeners could prevent

a greenish yellow mossy growth spreading from day to day.

The third sitting-room was Lord Okehampton's, and of that suffice it to say that, if possible, it epitomized the dulness and the state of park, house, and garden.

Why Lady Okehampton, who in other people's homes admired brightness and cheerfulness, and entered into life with spirit and enjoyment, should have allowed this state of things to exist, was a puzzle to all who knew her; the truth being that she was, when at home, paralysed by the man she had married, and yet whom, strange to say, she liked in a sort of way. To her he was different from what he was to any other human being, and he was as truly fond of her as he could be of any one. She had married him when still young; her boys had engrossed her while they were children; she was devoted to them; and while Lord Okehampton spent his days in turning over old 'Blue-books,' Lady Okehampton had lived in her nursery, and had become used to her life before she realized its loneliness. We have said she was not clever. She was even dull, and it was enough excitement for her life to take the daily drives, and receive possibly a chance visit from some neighbour more enterprising than his fellows.

She would spend an hour in her kitchen and house-

keeper's room, another in the nursery, and then she would sit on one of the hard comfortless chairs and work at her embroidery till luncheon was announced. Then one of these daily drives and a doze would well-nigh fill up the time till dinner, and that being generally at six o'clock, left an evening of four hours to be disposed of as best might be.

Such was the life to which Frances Fortescue returned when her engagement with Claude was broken off, and this life she must lead for months, and then only be relieved by the change to the equally stately and equally dull house in St. James Square.

Her prospects were changed. She must go back to the ways that had well-nigh killed her by their forlorn loneliness. This she had felt from the moment that she and Claude parted, and yet never from that hour had she doubted that she was deeply thankful and infinitely relieved. She had left Warnborough restless, anxious, self-reliant, dissatisfied. She returned to it quiet and contented, with a heart lifted above the troubles of daily life, having learned to know herself, and determined boldly to face her circumstances in life, and to do her duty where she was without pining for better, nobler, more congenial occupation,—to do what work came to her hand, and to bear and forbear, as it

had never occurred to her to do, before she went to Cossington.

There were two months before her, and she would work. She could not do as she would have wished, and go to visit schools and poor people as she had seen Mrs. Drummond to do. Lord Okehampton would have thought that the world, and especially the Okehampton family, was coming to an end, if any of his family had talked of giving themselves to any service of the poor. Once, and once only, had Frances asked whether she might attend to some cottages a few miles off, and Lord Okehampton's answer, couched in no measured terms of contempt, had been the first lesson of submission to authority that Frances had received and accepted without any inward disposition to murmur and rebel.

There was one thing she might and could do for others, and that involved self-sacrifice. She might relieve her mother from a charge which, ever since Lord Okehampton's health failed, had fallen heavily on her. She could read aloud some of the everlasting Blue-books which so delighted him. Her first offer was received with a growl and a sneer of doubt as to her capabilities. But Frances' voice was just as gentle as before, as she said, 'Will you not let me try, Lord Okehampton, at all events whilst my mother's

and Frances took the
the deaf and gouty old
voice, till every syllable
to her stepfather; and a
dull task that it was not
that he kept her reading.
matter of course that Fra
she did it willingly. It w
a piece of positive duty, a
conscious how doing somet
had softened her feeling towa

Then came another duty,
but still was occupation whi
from herself. It came in
little brothers had a bad fall
cricket. The boy's leg was
to be sent home with orders
sofa for a month.

The dulness of the inside
irritated the lad's mind --
done 1.

look at her own favourite books, marked and recommended by George Hervey, and with a smile would put her hand on them, and say,—

‘Wait, my faith is large in time,
To that which shapes it to a perfect end.’

She was more really happy than she ever had been before, and every hour she blessed the Cossington influence, and the guidance that had made her submit cheerfully and happily to that which before had seemed well-nigh unendurable.

George Hervey, was he ever thought of? She herself knew not how often, or how, without knowing it, she was looking forward to the visit to London, not for the sake of the society into which she must enter, but with the vague feeling that her ‘mentor’ would be there, and perhaps might find time to come and see her now and then. He was a model of everything that was perfect in her eyes. She could see no faults in him. The fault for which he so heavily reproached himself was unknown to her. He was *a* hero in her eyes, but as yet she hardly felt he was *her* hero.

We have said that Warnborough Court was not a place any one came to for pleasure, and yet it was with a view to possible pleasure ensuing that Lord Harlech found or pretended to find that there was some important busi-

ness upon which he must speak to Lord Okehampton, and which obliged him to propose a visit of two days to Warnborough Court. The visit was accepted; visitors were not so plentiful that any could be refused. Lady Okehampton was a little surprised, but not so much as she would have been had not false Flora, on parting with her at Castle Grange, whispered, 'Good-bye, dearest Lady Okehampton. I'm so glad this marriage is off. I never thought Claude half good enough for your darling. Ah! there's some one else who is worthy. And mind you write to me, dear, and tell me if a certain young peer, who shall be nameless, comes in search of the treasure in your casket.'

Lady Okehampton did not take it in directly, but when she got some twenty miles from Castle Grange, she suddenly exclaimed, to Frances' astonishment, 'Ah, yes! of course, I see; it would do very nicely,' and would vouchsafe no explanation.

Well, he arrived at Warnborough Court and paid his visit. — Her Ladyship was very gracious. — She would fain have sent Frances out riding with him, but as there was no chaperon that was impossible. So she took them out driving, and was well content to see that Frances listened attentively to Lord Harlech's conversation, and then she went off to sleep, as was her habit

always when in the open carriage. He was anxious and *empresé* in his attention to her. Flora Cavendish was right there; he did like her, and she listened to him because he told her of her friends. He spoke of George Hervey, and praised him in a way that satisfied even her ears. Then he told also of Claude and his fortunes and misfortunes. That also was an interest. She openly and gratefully expressed her thanks for the patient way in which he had answered her many questions. His pretence for a visit, *i.e.*, the talk with Lord Okehampton, came off, and the train bore him back to London, satisfied in his own mind that Frances was charming: had he not seen her in her home, going through a dreary routine of duties against which most girls, not to say heiresses, would have rebelled, showing all the time how much of real ability, common sense and principle, she could bring to bear on such subjects as grew out of the occupation of her dreary day? He thought she would make him a delightful wife, and that she was worth taking some pains to win, but somehow he did not feel much nearer his object. That Lady Okehampton was well pleased with him and with the visit, we may imagine from the fact of her writing as follows to Flora :—

that on our return I found
well, and able to get out a
good deal taken my place as
laid up with the prevalent in-

' Lord Harlech has paid u
delightful young man, and I
were a true prophet.

' Pray remember how *charm*
and how very much we look f
showing you this country and
me, most sincerely yours,

' I

' WARNBOROUGH COURT.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

REAPPEARANCE ON THE SCENE.

‘Examine men’s ruling principles, even those of the wise, what kind of things they avoid, and what kind they pursue.’

M. ANTONIUS.

‘Mine eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred ;
For the same sound is in my ears,
Which in these days I heard.’

WORDSWORTH.

THE full tide of business and pleasure had set in in London. Connoisseurs on such subjects pronounced that so much had never been *going on* ; there were more interesting questions in the House of Commons to be discussed ; there were more foreign notorieties in London whom it was necessary to receive with splendour ; and there was more money than usual to be spent. It was the gayest season that had been known for years. A royal marriage, a surplus in the revenue, and pence taken off the income-tax, had put every one in a good humour. The Ministry were



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above all; he felt a sadder, wiser man for all the changes, disappointments, and contradictions which had marked his own course in the interval, and still more for those which had separated and scattered the men whom he had formerly known, in the freshness of their entry on public life. Again, forcing itself even into so uncongenial an atmosphere as the House of Commons, he felt that his whole view of life was clouded and darkened by the ordeal, the fiery ordeal, through which he had so lately passed. He had loved, though he had not been loved; not that he would have had *her* fail in her duty, and love him. It was sad enough that he should have succumbed to the temptation. Daily and hourly he reproached himself. Now he had a heavy sorrow in addition to bear; he had been told that the girl he so believed in, that he had so truly honoured and trusted, was, with all her guileless ways and seeming earnestness, yet no better than the common run of young ladies; that she had thrown over a man to whom she was engaged, and left him to poverty, in hopes of making what would be called by the world a more brilliant marriage. We have heard of imaginative, excitable beings conceiving that they were ever beset by an unwelcome ghostly companion-double which would follow them wherever they went—in public, in

private—at home and abroad. Such a haunting spirit in thought dogged his steps. He might strive by busying himself to escape the intrusive thought, he might plunge into the vortex of debate, he might entangle himself in the keenest disputes,—but all in vain, there ever was the loved image at his side.

There was no want of effort on his part; he would try often and often to banish all thought of her; but it would not do, and the expression of the sweet grave eyes, such as he had seen them at Castle Grange, haunted him amidst the fiercest, stormiest debates, and pursued him even in his dreams.

There were many questions of interest before the House, and many had been the attempts of Government whips to make George Hervey relinquish his determination to remain an independent member; in vain—he stuck to what he said. He supported the Government; but he would be free, and accordingly day by day he occupied the same seat, below the gangway on the Liberal side of the House. He spoke admirably, and when he saw occasion to make his opinions known, few men indeed possessed to the same extent the power of condensing language and epitomizing facts, whilst still preserving a grace of expression and a Saxon purity of words, as did the member for ——shire. People might

differ, but they could not disregard any words falling from his lips ; and yet he was the member of no clique ; he had no school of devoted admirers ready to pronounce his speeches faultless, indeed he himself had been heard laughingly to say one evening, when his arguments had failed to convince his friends, that ‘the mistake of his life had been not having early belonged to a “mutual admiration society,” where a dozen men or so, leagued together by a supposed unanimity of views, are ever ready to be *claquers* to each other ; that fashion of which,’ he said, ‘we see so much in these days, when a set of men starting in life together somehow tacitly agree to pronounce all that each other do *perfection*, and so achieve a success that nothing but belonging to such a society will accomplish. It is always successful, my dear fellow,’ he added to the young man he was speaking to, ‘and I advise you to try the plan.’

He was on committees from morning till night ; he was a willing horse, and they worked him accordingly. He liked the work well enough, apart from a legitimate interest in the subject ; it gave him something to distract his thoughts. Besides this, he was specially occupied with a bill which he was to bring in, and which he hoped to make the Government take up and adopt—a

bill for the improvement in some points of the condition of the labouring classes ; one to which he had given the full benefit of his long experience of the subject. It was a bill which made some noise at the time, and which brought out the interest for or against it of all the squirearchy of the country. The pros and cons were discussed at all the quarter-session meetings, and many pamphlets were written on the subject. Leaders in the *Times* had even lent their powerful voice, and, fortunately for Sir George Hervey, their bias was in his favour.

Meanwhile his re-appearance in the London world had not passed unnoticed by the 'mothers of society,' if we may be allowed the phrase. There were dowagers who well enough knew that the hard-working politician was a man with a long pedigree, and yet longer rent-roll ; some who reminded blooming daughters that ' Sir George was quite a young man still, my dear ; and his poor mother had such diamonds, really the finest I ever saw, quite historical ones,' and ' a lovely place, quite perfect,' ' such a clever man : ' others who would say ' sure to be in office, darling ; don't forget to talk to him to-night at the Chancellor's.' Such and such were the comments ; and need we say that had Sir George Hervey, of Cossington Park, Bart., M.P., chosen to eat

six dinners a day he could easily have done so, if he had wished to avail himself of even a part of the shower of invitations that poured on him? But for that kind of life he did not care. He would dine out, but it must be with people he cared for, and with old friends. As for society at large, he had neither time nor inclination for it.

There was plenty of work to do, and many a good excuse did this same work give him. He had also some duties to attend to at his own house, or rather at his sister's, for the family mansion in Portman Square had been let for many years; so he anchored himself in her very cheerful house in Chesham Place; and so soon as she arrived he did the duties she asked of him, and every other Saturday found a small gathering of pleasant people at her house. The dinners were simple and unassuming, such as he felt it suited his station to give; no straining after effect, nothing done because others did it; the dinners were popular and easy; clever men and agreeable women met and exchanged ideas. Still though this was added to George Hervey's interests, he could not feel happy; no, he was still in love, and in love as one capable of strong impressions, capable of judging of high qualities, and capable of intense affection—who had never frittered his sensibilities away by ephemeral

attachments, and who had never before been entangled in the trammels of real attachment—alone can love. The loved image was there, and do what he would he could not banish it. Again and again such thoughts as these would he try to force upon himself: ‘Ah, who would be in love if they could help it? surely no one would wilfully, blindly rush into what brings, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, crushing sorrow to one, and sometimes to both parties. I knew little about the matter till now, and now that I realize what being in love is, I also see how happy my old life was before.’ All through the feigned veil would beam the glowing image of the only one he ever had loved, decked with all the beauties that his fond generous heart could hang about it. Thus would he moralize in vain, and think he was living it down, when the fact was that at the end of every soliloquy he loved her more than ever, even now when he was called upon to think she was not worthy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DUTIES OF SOCIETY.

‘Dull masters we ! Life’s festival
Enchants the blythe newcomer ;
But seasons change,—where then are all
These friendships of our summer ?
Wan pilgrims flit across our track,
Cold looks attend the meeting,
We only greet them, glancing back,
Or pass without a greeting.’

F. LOCKER.

‘Spesso Amor sotto la forma
D’amistà ride, e s’asconde
Poi si mischia, e si confonde
Con lo sdegno, e col rancor.
In Pietà ei’ si trasforma ;
Par trastullo, e par dispetto ;
Mà nel suo diverso aspetto
Sempr’ egli è, l’istesso Amor.’

ABATE BUONDELMONTE.

‘FRANCES, my darling, will you attend to me one moment ?’ said Lady Okehampton, who had been interrupting her daughter’s reading at intervals of two minutes for upwards of an hour—a thing which a year ago would have driven Frances to her own room in

despair ; but which she now endured with more patience than we ever expected to find in her disposition.

‘ Yes, mother, anything you like,’ she said, at first closing the book, having one finger in her place, and then more resolutely putting in a mark, laid it on the table, and produced her work from her pocket.

‘ Ah, that is nice ; I want a comfortable talk about these dinners that dear papa wants to have ; such a pity, for it’s sure to give him the gout,’ and Lady Okehampton sighed as she remembered the nursing that would inevitably follow.

‘ Yes, dear, I made out the list from the names that Lord Okehampton mentioned. You know he said twelve or fourteen, and there are only ten for the first day and eleven the next.

‘ Whom shall we ask ? They must be men, you know, as we have petticoats enough. I know.—I’ll ask George Hervey—his sister called yesterday ; and Lord Harlech—they know each other,—and he knows the Coventrys, and Arbuthnots, and Stanleys, so that will do. Do write a note, dearest, to them both ; and by the bye, give him the choice of days, for I am told he is very busy, and he will very likely be engaged.’

‘ I shall write in your name, mother,’ said Frances, half wishing, and yet dreading to write to her old friend.

‘O no, Frances. What nonsense! Why, of course, he knows your writing. Just say I am busy; and so I am. Morley wants me to see the lace in the old cabinet. You can write in mine to Lord Harlech.’

Frances was left alone. The groom of the chambers had mended the pens as usual, and the paper was of the best, but somehow many pens were used, and many sheets of paper begun, before she had written a note to her taste.

‘ST. JAMES SQUARE.

‘DEAR SIR GEORGE,—Will you excuse my writing in my mother’s name, as she is occupied? and will you give her and Lord Okehampton the pleasure of your company at dinner on Saturday the 23d, at a quarter to eight, or Wednesday the 27th?—Yours very sincerely,

‘F. FORTESCUE.’

After some demur she added, as a postscript :—

‘Give my best love to Mrs. Drummond. We haven’t seen you for a long time.’

The note to Lord Harlech was also written and sent, and in due time came an acceptance from him, and the following answer from George Hervey. Ah, what a struggle had that letter cost to write :—

'DEAR FRANCES,—Pray tell Lady Okehampton, with my kindest regards, how much I regret that I cannot avail myself of either of her kind invitations. I shall hope to call on Lord Okehampton before long. My sister means to come to see you soon.

'I am very busy; and find myself better for work.—
Yours always truly,

G. G. W. HERVEY.

'THE ATHENÆUM.'

Until she had opened and read the note, Frances did not realize how much she had built her hopes upon seeing George Hervey. Now what a blank, she could not but have some sort of apprehension that this was a slight; that a cloud had arisen between herself and her friend, a cloud which she could not account for. Her mother's comment, 'Ah, I told you he would be engaged—very tiresome;' and the sequel, 'Well, I shall ask Flora Cavendish, as one of the Coventry girls doesn't come,' fell unheeded on her ear. She did not care who came or who went. She felt a sense of dreary aching at her heart that she could ill account for, and she went to her room to think it out alone.


The sun shone brightly, and the first freshness of spring was on the trees in the square. Her room was cheerful and pretty; and she had been wont to think

she was always happy when alone, with her birds and flowers, in that sunny apartment; but to-day—what was it? what had deadened and darkened everything?—Two or three cold lines from a man of whose existence she hardly knew a few months back. Frances Fortescue was not one who shirked her own thoughts; she would probe them to the bottom. Why did she feel so deeply what she was getting more and more to look upon as the avoidance of her late friend? If he chose to be capricious, what was it to her? He was nothing to her. Why should she care? Ah! why?—but she did. He had been so tender and kind to her; so gentle and forbearing. Poor girl!—she sat there with her head resting on her hand, feeling that it was wrong and weak thus to take to heart the caprice of George Hervey.

Then came the question, *Was* it caprice? She felt it was not. She felt he must have good reason for what he did, though it was hard to bring herself to think so. Woman-like, she trusted; woman-like, she palliated the offence committed against herself; and then, *woman-like*, as she sat there alone, and her birds sang out their jubilee merrily, then almost suddenly the curtain of darkness which shrouded her heart's vision lifted—the sunshine broke in all its brightness on her

soul; she knew at last that she had come to think of George Hervey as she had never thought of man before. She knew that she loved him, and that no one would ever be to her what he was. But ere long there came a revulsion as violent as her high ecstasy. Bitter tears rose to her eyes, and she realized her 'degradation,' as she stigmatized it. She loved a man who was avoiding her. She had given away her heart unasked. No, this might not be. Her heart felt as if it was breaking, but she must peremptorily set herself to calm and master it: so the poor heavy eyelids were bathed, and the rebellious locks smoothed back from the broad white brow, and with a half-murmured prayer for strength to bear the trials in her life, she went down to her mother, and for an hour and more busied herself with the daily routine of life, wrote notes, made lists of books, music, visits, and commissions, as if she had no higher aim or object in life. The note to Flora Cavendish was sent. She accepted. It was most remarkable how many adjectives expressing pleasure the lady contrived to get into her short note, and also that every alternate word was scored and underlined.

Two days later, on returning from the usual afternoon drive, Frances saw two of Sir George Hervey's cards on the table. 'Called when we were sure to be out,' she



murmured, as the thought passed through her mind ; and she had rightly guessed. Nay, more. Sir George had seen the carriage vanish down King Street as he came across the Square ; and, with a bitter smile, he had walked across and left the cards for Lord and Lady Okehampton. It was a drop more added to her cup ; for Frances knew, as we all know, that there are few things that more markedly express a wish to avoid a person than when one who knows the habits of our life chooses the moment when we are sure to be absent to leave a conventional card—a card that will square appearances to the world at large, and yet leave him uncommitted to anything more than the most ordinary civility.

The day of the dinner-party came. Lord Okehampton was in unusual health and strength, and his wife proportionably happy. Flora Cavendish came in first of all the guests, to get a moment alone with her ‘dearest Lady Okehampton.’ The Duchess of Arlington and her little Duke arrived very late, and with many apologies. ‘What had happened?—why, when it was past seven the Duke was nowhere to be found, and at half-past he returned to the house with a bottleful of minnows, which he had been catching for some vivarium, in a stream at Chertsey ; and, my dear, he

was wet through, and I had to give him a hot bath ; but I'm so sorry and so ashamed, and so is he—ain't you, Duke?—Ah, there you are, my child. Bless me, how pale she looks ! You must come and let me take care of you ; and you, Miss Flora—why, what on earth brings you, at your time of life, gadding up to London ? Husband-hunting—eh, ma'am ?' said the outspoken little lady, who generally thought aloud.

Frances saw much of Lord Harlech that evening ; and never for a moment did Flora's eyes lose sight of her, even while she seemed absorbed in her neighbour's conversation. Again did Frances strive to interest herself in others, and was glad of the opportunity of hearing something of *Claude and his wife*—for married they now were.

'Married, and living on nothing, in Brompton.' Such was the account he gave. Poor Lord Harlech ! He was getting dangerously fond of Frances, and he hoped in time to get her to listen to his love, but as yet he had said no word to give her an idea of his growing preference.

The Duchess tapped Frances on the shoulder, and said : ' Here, child, I want to talk to you a bit ;' and having got her into the conservatory, at the far end of the room, she kissed her kindly, and said : ' You

are a sad white chit; what's come over the lass? I don't approve of this. You must come back to our bonnie Welsh air.' Frances coloured scarlet. The Duchess winked to herself—a habit in which she was apt to indulge. 'I suspect you are moped. You shall come out with me. How are our dear friends the Herveys?' she said, seemingly arranging her feathers and diamonds in front of the glass; where, however, she could see Frances' face reflected, whilst the latter thought herself out of sight. Again a yet deeper blush. 'Whew!' said the old lady to herself, 'I must see to this;' and then aloud, 'I suppose you have heard from himself, if he ever could sing his own praises, what a great man he is becoming? and there's a wonderful bill about poor people—Heaven knows what it is—but people talk of it; and I mean to go and hear the debate, and you must come too, child. You care about all that kind of stuff, I know;' and so the good-natured woman chattered on, probing her heart with a skilful, but not unkindly hand.

Frances felt comforted by her treatment, rough though it was, far more than by the supercilious tenderness of Flora Cavendish, whose honey turned to gall on her very lips.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LOVE IN A COTTAGE.

* 'Point de roses sans épines.'

'CLAUDE! Claude! do listen to me for once. I have been talking to you for ten minutes, and you have never so much as looked up from that nasty *Bell's Life*.'

'Well, Helen, what is the matter? You always make a point of interrupting me; and I have only a quarter of an hour before I have to go off to barracks.'

'The everlasting barracks! O Claude,' said Helen in a disconsolate voice, 'do take me out. It is so dull here, alone all day in this room. No one comes to see me; and when I ask mamma to take me out, she says she can't let her carriage and horses come into these poky streets; that I may go up to her if I like after luncheon, and she will take me to the Park as if I could walk to Grosvenor Street, so weak as I am; and you are always saying cabs cost money—and so they do,' sighed poor Helen.

‘My dear, you know I can’t help it. I don’t want to go to barracks. I’m sure I’d much rather go down to Hornsey Wood with the fellows this afternoon,’ answered her husband.

Helen took up a book, and listlessly turned over its pages. Then she looked round the room. It certainly looked very unlike the rooms at Castle Grange, or her mother’s abode in Grosvenor Street. A small square room, with a dirty dingy paper and carpet, and heavy mahogany furniture, which contrasted much with the wedding presents, china and ormolu, scattered about it. It was a lodging they had taken in Brompton, after the first crash of his father’s affairs took place. Claude, to do him justice, had behaved very well on that occasion. It had been a terrible blow to him, and for some hours he had meditated violent revenge upon Grimshaw ; but his was essentially an easy temper, and, after a while, he came to the conclusion that there was no use in ‘fretting over spilt milk,’ and that it was bad enough to be a pauper without being unhappy into the bargain. So he just told his brother officers that he was ruined, and tried to pacify Helen, who cried like a baby at the disappointment of not having fine carriages, houses, and horses, and whose grief was further aggravated by her mother’s taunts and reproaches ; and then, when he found that his father’s selfishness had left him in the lurch, he set to work and

calculated his income, and all the tiny sources from which it flowed. Do what he would, he could only make up £500 a year. He had hitherto spent nearly as much again as a bachelor. Never mind, he thought. He would face his difficulties; he would stay on in his profession, and hope for the best. He had become as fond of Helen as it was in his nature to be of anything; and she was really fond of him also. Of course she cried and grumbled, but that he bore patiently. He would work away hard at regimental duties, with a view to being adjutant, which would increase his pay; he would go to the staff-college; in short, the best part of his character came out, strengthened by adversity.

Helen looked pale and delicate. She longed to be out in the fresh summer day. Suddenly she started as she looked out of the window, and exclaimed, 'Claude, there's Lady Okehampton's carriage, and Frances by herself! Look out!' Claude coloured with embarrassment. He had not seen Frances since his marriage, and he rather dreaded the meeting. He need not have done so. The door was opened by the slipshod maid, who left Frances to announce herself, apparently too much awestruck by the appearance of the magnificent footman who was in attendance on the young lady to have any speech left to her.

Frances came into the room, looking, as Claude

thought, prettier than he had ever seen her, in a little simple muslin gown and blue bonnet. He was quite surprised to see how very beautiful she was, but she gave him no time for reflection ; for, giving a hand to each, she said, as she kissed Helen, ' You dear people, I only heard the day before yesterday where you were in town. I did so want to come and see you, and now I have come with a request from mamma that you will go out with me, Helen. I have so many cards to leave, and I don't like driving alone. You and I might leave our cards together,' she continued ; and then she added, after a moment's pause, ' would you come back and dine with us, and the carriage can take you home, as Lord Okehampton has to go to the House to hear some debate? How well you are looking, Claude ; better than this little woman ! I suspect you don't go out enough ; you are used to fresh air. You must take compassion on me sometimes, and come out with me, for mamma so often has to drive with Lord Okehampton in the close carriage, and then I am all alone.'

By the time that she had made this speech, both Claude and Helen had recovered their first feeling of shame and surprise, and Claude said in an honest voice, that had a shade of self-reproach in it, ' Frances, I'm sure it's very kind of you to come and look us up, much more than I deserve ; and indeed I shall be most grateful


if you will look after this poor little wife of mine; her life is dull enough in all conscience, for I am so much away, and you know we are all but paupers now,—genteel paupers,’ and he laughed an uneasy bitter laugh.

Frances put her hand kindly on his shoulder and said, ‘There are no such things as obligations between us. Ah, by the bye, here are some fresh roses from home, and a few early strawberries, I thought you would like, dear; and now put on your things and come out, for I know we shall never get through our work if we don’t begin at once.’

Helen, whose face had brightened up very much at the prospect of the change, left the room.

For a moment Claude stood irresolute, and then coming up to Frances, took her hand and pressing it to his lips as if it had been that of his queen, he said to her, ‘Frances, I know that I have no right to think you can attach a straw’s value to my opinion, but you must for once let me tell you how nobly I think you are behaving; believe me, that I never shall forget this kindness of yours, or the good for evil you are returning.’

‘Hush, Claude. *Lass die Todten ruhn*,—I hope to be always your friend and Helen’s. Here she is,’ she said, as she turned to the young wife, ‘and now we will depart.’



CHAPTER XXXIX.

SOLITARY GRANDEUR.

What is man ? a foolish baby ;
Vainly strives and fights and frets,
Demanding all, deserving nothing :
One small grave is what he gets.'

CARLYLE.

JOHN GRIMSHAW was the agent no longer. He was Mr. Grimshaw of Castle Grange, and was enrolled in Burke's *Landed Gentry*, and recognised by the world as a man of property. That was a fact no one attempted to deny. Ambition was satisfied, and revenge sated. Was there yet a roc's egg in his mind's eye ? He had attained to the outward position of one of the county families ; a magnificent house was his, with a fortune that could support it ; but when you had said that, you had said all that could be said regarding his status in society. Had he gained one social step ; had the county families received him as one of themselves ? No indeed ! If he had expected to attain

that also, he must have been signally disappointed. Not a day passed in which he did not feel that he was not *one of them*. Whether the squirearchy met him in market-place, church, or session, every man and woman amongst them gave him to understand that they despised him, and that John Grimshaw might own both land and money, and yet that oil and water would sooner mix, than they associate with a man whom they looked on as little better than a robber. Nay, more, he not only did not gain ground,—he lost it. Had not Mr. Cavendish,—kind-hearted Henry Cavendish,—passed him in the High Street of the county town on market day? and instead of ‘Well, Grimshaw! old fellow; come back and dine, and help us to eat a haunch of venison,’ it had been the stiffest of inclinations, and a finger put to his hat; and even that done with such manifest effort and an expression of such disgust on his face, that John Grimshaw had turned his head in very shame. Had not the Duchess of Arlington, who had been wont to ask him to her Duke’s, and treat him with the civility that to one in his class of life had been of more value than many thousands, looked at him, at a public meeting, as though she had never seen him in her life before? Nay, even raised her eyeglass with an affectation of impertinence, very

unusual to her blunt little Grace, and turned to her husband and remarked, in her very audible voice, 'She wondered how such people were admitted.'

Did he fare better in his own class of life? If possible, worse; for they all envied while they despised him, and the doctors and the attorneys and rich tradesmen of his neighbours, who had been his friends since his youth, declined his invitations and avoided his society. He had been more successful than they had, by not very scrupulous means, and he should not have the gratification of showing off his splendour to *them*.

Therefore, as far as happiness went, at present he had not gained much. He tried to comfort himself as he sat in the state dining-room, with his drunken disreputable son opposite to him, by thinking of Sir Victor's degradation and of Claude's poverty; but it was poor consolation, and he thought of his old home and its cheerful comfort, and contrasted it with his lonely state; he was afraid even of his own butler, and thought with regret of the cheerful cleanly little maid-servant, who had been wont to bring in his slippers, pipe, and brandy and water.

Then he would turn his mind to Flora Cavendish. Did she repent now having spurned the lawyer?

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CHAPTER XL.

ROYAL ACADEMY.

'Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny.'—*Hamlet*.

'Calumny will sear virtue itself.'—*A Winter's Tale*.

'What wound did ever heal but by degrees?'—*Othello*.

GEORGE HERVEY had been standing for well-nigh half-an-hour at the Royal Academy, in front of one picture, from which he had several times turned away, determined to pass on to others, but yet again he had returned to the contemplation, as though unable to tear himself away.

It was not by any celebrated master, nor was it specially well painted, nor was it very pretty in itself; it was a simple subject enough,—a young girl reading a letter,—but the face was like one of which the image haunted George Hervey day and night, and the expression reminded him of one that he remembered on

her face at Castle Grange, when he so markedly had avoided her. He had just raised his hand to conceal the lower part of the face that he might settle in his own mind what it was that was like Frances, when a hand was laid on his arm, and a voice was murmuring, 'George, dear George, what a delightful and unexpected meeting!'

'Flora, how you startled me,' said Sir George, with an inflexion which certainly was not one of pleasure in his voice. He could not conceal his vexation; he had meant to spend an hour quietly looking at the pictures, and here was his cousin, who never let him alone, and whom he rather less than cared for, come to spoil his pleasure. He could not pretend to be gratified by the meeting. 'Shall we move on?' he added. 'There are some things by a Danish painter I want to see in the other room.'


'What is this you have been looking at so attentively?' said Flora, turning to her catalogue. '"A First Love-letter.—T. SMITH." Nothing much in it to my mind; girl's got a horrid figure, and looks affected. T. Smith, I can't congratulate you. I suppose you were thinking of something else, George, you dear absent creature?' The lady saw well enough the likeness, but chose to ignore it. 'Let's go by all means

and see your pictures. I'm at your orders, for I have nothing to do, and plenty of time to do it in.'

For an hour they sauntered through the rooms—George Hervey was too kind-hearted to let his cousin perceive how very much she bored him. Millais' merits and demerits had been descanted on; Sir Edwin Landseer duly admired; other painters properly criticised; and when again on their way out they passed the picture which had so riveted George Hervey's attention, he gave it a lingering look of affection as he passed. For that look Flora, who perceived it well enough, thought she would pay him off, and shoot the arrow which had been in her quiver ready for use when the moment came. Casting a hasty glance at the picture, she exclaimed, as if suddenly struck by the idea—'There's a look of some one I know in that dauby thing. Who can it be? Ah, I see, Frances Fortescue! Yes; it's like her. The eyes are better than hers, and the head is a prettier shape; but there is a look—by the bye, has Lady Okehampton written to announce the young lady's engagement? What, dear?—no! Ah, then, you are sure to hear in a day or so. I met Lord Harlech at dinner there two days ago. He is most devoted; and I must say I think it is better luck than she deserved, after treating poor Claude as she did.

Where's Sir Victor, by the bye? What a smash that was! and I hear that brute Grimshaw is actually living at the Grange. I always hated the man. Will you mind calling the carriage, dear? I must get home. Let me put you down somewhere. Do now; it's a pleasure to me. No! Won't you let me? Well, good-bye. Come and see me soon. Best of best loves to dear Kate. So glad to have seen you, George.'

And she did go at last; and George Hervey stood on the steps of the Royal Academy, gazing at nothing, but lost in thought, for so long a period that at last an anxious policeman, who had watched him for some time, came to the conclusion that something was the matter with him, and went up to ask him if he could do anything for him. The words recalled him to himself, and he rushed quickly down the steps, and across the Square, in the direction of the House of Commons. She was lost to him, then, for ever! Again she was a promised wife; and again he must banish her from his heart. Till he heard his cousin's announcement, he had not known how much he had built on the thought that she was free. He scorned himself for the bitter grief he felt. He would not give way. She was nothing to him. He had not even seen her for six weeks. He would work,—work harder than



ever. Did work ever kill? He repented the evil thought ere it had well glanced through his aching heart, and, with a prayer for forgiveness, he entered the Abbey. It was three o'clock. The afternoon's service was just beginning. He was soothed by the sweet voices as they chanted the psalms of the day, and by the calming influences of the place. He listened to words which spoke comfort to his wounded spirit, and came out with a quieter sorrow than he had taken in. He went bravely to his work in the House, spoke forcibly on the subject of Colonial Government, and went to bed conscious that he had tried to do his duty, knowing that he was a happier man for having so tried.

CHAPTER XLI.

A PUBLIC TRIUMPH.

‘Your labours, my talented brother,
Are happily over at last ;
They tell me that somehow or other
The bill is rejected or passed.’

PRAED'S *Poems*.

‘THE Duchess of Arlington!’ announced the butler early one afternoon in the following week, as he ushered her rotund little figure into Frances’ morning room in St. James Square, where the said Frances was lying on her sofa, trying to follow the intricacies of argument in a debate of a previous evening,—one in which she took a vivid interest, for it was the discussion upon the bill which had originally been George Hervey’s, and which had seemed to the Government so admirable in all its bearings, that they had resolved to support it with all their strength. He had spoken several times during the last fortnight on various subjects, but on no occasion had any speech

of his been listened to with the intense interest that the whole House had given to this one. He had surpassed himself; and warming with his subject as he dilated on the sufferings of his fellow-creatures, he had carried all honest hearts with him. Long and unanimous had been the cheers that rang through the House as he sat down. This speech Frances had been perusing, wondering within herself whether it was wrong to indulge herself in the pleasure of reading of her friend, and of the triumph of one who, she was conscious, was but too dear to her. A week had elapsed since the debate in question, and this was not the first time that the girl had read the speeches.

Usually her time was fully occupied. She made herself useful to her mother in a thousand ways. She had even softened Lord Okehampton's heart to her by her willingness to sit by him, and read to him for hours. She was fully acting up to her duty, but yet she was very sad. How could it be otherwise? How could she do anything but dwell upon the causeless estrangement of a friend she valued before all others, and to whom she felt she had never by thought, word, or deed given the smallest cause of offence? A gloom, such as she had never known before, was gathering over her life, which seemed to thicken day by day.

Yet, notwithstanding, she never blamed him for an instant. She had sufficient trust in him and esteem for his character to believe that, though she knew it not, he had some good reason for the change. Women truly have an enduring faith when once they give their esteem with their love, often cruelly disappointed. Yet it might be said of them: 'It is more blessed to trust than to doubt.'

'Well, my dear,' said the Duchess, as she waddled into the room, 'what! moping all alone, and reading a paper a week old. Bless my soul! might as well be in Skye or the Orkney Islands. There—sit still; sit still, child, and listen to me. I'm come to fetch you to go out with me. I've settled it with mamma, so don't pretend to have any ridiculous scruples of that kind. Mamma's going with my lord to Chiswick, and I'm to have possession of you for as long as I like. My dear Duke has trotted off to a lecture at the College of Surgeons about some abominable creatures or other, and I, having no companion, am going to take you first to do some shopping, to prevent my getting scarlet and yellow gowns, which somehow or other I always choose, and then the Duke says I look like a parrot; after that, my dear, I mean you to come down with me to the

House of Commons. George Hervey has put my name down for to-night's debate, which will be very good, I'm told. You know it's that thing that people are talking about so much—about the poor people. I don't know much about the matter; but I know my hero, George Hervey, says it is a good measure, and I believe in him. It's a horrid stuffy little place to go into that gallery of ours, but beggars mustn't be choosers. Take some salts and a fan, my dear; and now look sharp, for I must go directly. Here, let me help you. Nonsense! no thanks,' she said, as Frances, whose face had brightened more than it had done for many a day, began to express her gratitude.

Soon ready and in the carriage, they speedily found themselves in Redmayne's shop, where Frances did patiently endure an hour's inspection of silks and satins of all hues of the rainbow. Then, after nearly as long an interview with the dressmakers, they found themselves driving under the archway leading to the Speaker's court and to the entrance of the ladies' gallery.

'Plenty of stairs, my dear,' said her Grace, as she stood panting and puffing about half-way up. 'Never mind; what is worth getting is worth taking some trouble for. Have you ever been here before? No.

Ah, well, I can tell you all about it. Ever seen the House? No again. Why, bless me, where have you lived? Here we are,' she added, pushing the swing-door into the lobby. 'Are we in time?' she said to the attentive messenger.

'Plenty of time, your Grace. There are the two places at the end of the front seat. Mr. Villiers has been speaking only a moment;' and they were soon seated in the dark though not uncomfortable seats provided for womankind by the Commons of England.

The words 'Silence is requested' did not seem to affect the Duchess much. She made many comments, explained to Frances who all the people were that she could see, had no hesitation in almost audibly contradicting the speakers upon any point on which she did not agree, and laughed loudly when a repartee tickled her fancy, or when she saw that a blow hit hard on either side. She had taken a great liking to the young girl sitting by her side; she was sure that George Hervey loved Frances much, and had a shrewd idea that the feeling was returned. Something she felt had been 'muddled,' as she called it, in the whole affair, and being the most good-natured little woman alive, she thought she would try and draw Frances out, and discover what it all meant. The rumour of Lord

Harlech's attentions and intentions had reached her ears, but she had pooh-poohed the whole thing. Had she suspected that Flora Cavendish had opened her mouth on the subject, she would have been more uneasy; but of that she was *entirely* ignorant. She meant to have persuaded Frances to open a little to her during tea-time; that was effectually prevented by the presence of another lady in the waiting-room.

The debate waxed warm. A brilliant speech from the Opposition benches on the second reading of the bill, fell from the lips of an honourable member, who flattered himself that he gained notoriety and credit that evening. In his heart he fully agreed with the bill, but being in Opposition, his arguments were telling, and his logic was perfect, against the measure. He sat down amidst clamorous cheers from his party, which were repeated again and again.

A hubbub of a minute, and Frances' heart seemed to stop beating, as she saw George Hervey standing in front of the first bench below the gangway, and heard the notes of the rich powerful voice she knew so well fall in measured cadence from his lips. The House gave him that mute, rapt attention which is its greatest mark of respect. The members sat quietly in their places. There was neither the hurrying to and fro nor

the hum of conversation that disheartens so many a speaker. They listened—they listened to the man who was certain of what he was speaking, and who, they knew, had given some of the best years of his life to consider the subject before them. As he got further into the matter, his clearly stated opinions carried all before them. He took his opponent's fagot of arguments to pieces, breaking them one by one by the sheer strength of his knowledge of facts. He spoke for an hour and ten minutes, and wound up with an entreaty couched in these words: 'And now, sir, I leave this case in the hands of the House. Whatever it does, it will do advisedly. It may have knowledge on the matter far greater than mine, but I have seen the abuse and misery, and witnessed the sorrow entailed by a law, under which the sufferers endure patiently, trusting to those who make laws for them to alter those laws when they find that they no longer bring happiness to those for whom we have the privilege—but, sir, we must remember we have also the heavy responsibility—of legislating.'

The words were not much, but the voice had a deep pathos and an *earnestness* that could not pass unheeded, and there had been tears in other eyes than Frances' during part of the honourable baronet's speech.

The debate continued, however, but for a short time, for such had been the force of George Hervey's earnest eloquence, that the speeches from the Opposition benches were but impatiently listened to, and the final speech had scarce been heard for the cries 'Divide, divide!' The division-bell rang, the words 'The Ayes to the right and the Noes to the left' had been pronounced, whips and tellers had rushed backwards and forwards, after the manner customary on such occasions, the members came pouring in again, and when silence had been duly obtained, the tellers came forward, and the words 'the Ayes to the right were 399, and the Noes to the left 157,' were received with deafening cheers; and George Hervey had won one victory for his fellow-creatures.

CHAPTER XLII.

SOUGHT AND WON.

'Ask if I love thee? smiles cannot tell
Plainer what tears are now showing too well.
Had I not loved thee, my skies had been clear;
Had I not loved thee, I had not been here
Weeping by thee.'

KINGSLEY.

THE House thinned; the galleries emptied. The Duchess of Arlington was talking to Frances, who listened with only half an ear, her mind running on that which she had just heard, and her heart in a glow of pride at the success her friend had achieved. The Duchess talked on; the door opened; they did not turn round to see who had entered, when a voice addressed the Duchess in these words, 'How d'ye do, your Grace? I have come up to know if you would like to come and see the frescoes. There's a beautiful light now, and there will be nothing going on for an hour or so.'

'Good gracious, is that you, Sir George? Vastly kind, I'm sure. Of course I should like to come out of this stifling pen. Frances, my dear. Sir George, here's

Frances Fortescue. We've been listening to you with all our ears.'

The suddenness of the meeting took them both aback. There was no retreat for either party; they were face to face. They must speak simply and naturally. Sir George recovered his self-possession first, and, putting out his hand, he took Frances' for an instant, saying, 'It is really so dark up here, that you must forgive my not seeing you. How is Lady Okehampton?'

Commonplace as the words were, his voice shook more in speaking them than it had done in the most pathetic part of his speech.

Frances' pale face lighted with a sad smile as she heard the well-known voice, but hers was calm and sweet as she answered the queries. The Duchess looked surprised. Of a demonstrative nature herself, she could not imagine that friends such as she had seen George Hervey and Frances Fortescue to be, should meet thus.

'Come along, good people, if we are to see this fresco. I don't know anything about such things; but I know this, that one is fool enough to think one ought to see what everybody talks about; and then, Sir George, I want her to see the House, everything—lighting, ventilation, and all, if we can get leave.'

Sir George gave his arm to the Duchess when they got into the lobby, and Frances walked by her side. He then proceeded to explain to them the uses of the various committee, tea, and dining rooms. They came at last to the peers' committee-room, where Herbert's magnificent fresco of Moses absorbed all Frances' attention. The Duchess, who had about as much feeling for art as the publican who looks up at the sign over his door, said it was a 'sandy sort of thing,' and proceeded to talk of other topics. George Hervey could not speak to Frances in the presence of a third person, and yet he was longing to tell her how much he wished her happiness as Lord Harlech's wife. As he talked to the Duchess, he watched the pensive face, and asked himself, Could that girl be the worldly, hard scheming creature that she had been represented? If so, adieu to all theories of physiognomy.

They wandered on through the endless lobbies, galleries, and passages. The Duchess was insatiable in her curiosity. She spared Sir George nothing that could by any pretence be lionized. Frances walked silently beside her vivacious friend. Three times did the heavy bell strike the quarters, and still they wandered on, and the sight-seeing was not finished. Eight o'clock struck, and the long level rays of the sun shone horizontally

through the windows. The evening was beautiful beyond description. They had wandered into the members' tea-room,—now nearly untenanted,—from the windows of which the full expanse of the brimming Thames was seen.

'Oh! this is charming,' said her Grace, 'and that terrace, that delightful terrace! Sir George, may we not go down to it?'

'Certainly, certainly,' he answered in so cheerless a voice that Frances could not help saying—

'Don't you think, my dear Duchess, that we all are tired? I am sure you must be, Sir George, after all your exertions this evening.'

'Nonsense, child,' was all the answer that the young lady received from her chaperon, and again the wink, the ducal wink, might have been seen.

The Duchess of Arlington was a sharp-sighted woman as well as a kind-hearted one, and something, though not all, she had understood of the phase of mind of her two companions. 'Pique, pique, stuff and nonsense. Let them clear it up; of course they can't do it with an old woman listening.'

Now, truth to say, the good woman was very hungry, and had visions of a very substantial tea-supper she had ordered at 8.30 in the little waiting-room; but she was

unselfish. She had looked from the window on to the terrace, and what had she seen to induce her suddenly to relinquish the desire for tea, and possess her with the violent fancy for a twilight walk? She had seen a man who, if she could but arrive there in time, would make a fourth to their party, a distant cousin of hers, a Northumberland squire. She said nothing, but began to walk away faster than her fat little body was in the habit of moving,—so fast, indeed, that Frances was left quite behind for a minute or two. Never to her mind had George Hervey appeared so personally attractive; his face still beaming with a noble purity of expression and a calm sweetness that would have arrested the attention of a stranger; and to Frances was eminently touching. It was the expression that a successful struggle with self will sometimes leave. We have said George Hervey was a fine grand type of an English gentleman; and when we have said that his tenderness was that of a woman, have we not described a man capable and worthy of winning any woman's heart? This was Frances' feeling, though it was unexpressed even in thought. At last the terrace was reached. It was nearly deserted. Two members at the farther end were smoking and discussing the probable starters for the Derby. One solitary man was

leaning over the parapet, and he also was smoking. The Duchess, as she reached the terrace, walked in that direction. She passed the solitary man in an unconscious manner. She was leaning on Sir George Hervey's arm; and the smoker's back was turned. There was not much in the observation that Sir George made, but the Duchess chose to laugh her loudest, merriest peal. The man turned round. 'Good gracious, Tom, who expected to see you?' (very untrue.) 'Well, I am glad to see you' (very true). 'Haven't met for an age. How have you been? Come and tell me about Clapperton and all your people.'

Now, as her Grace left George Hervey's arm, and did not introduce either of her companions to 'Tom,' and, moreover, moved a few steps and planted herself on the nearest bench, covering it completely with her voluminous skirt, there was nothing for her companions to do but to await her good pleasure leaning against the wall which abuts on the river. There are many fair sights in the world, and many beautiful sunsets to be watched; but Londoners little think and little know of the intense beauty to be seen, and the pleasure to be obtained, from watching the last rays of the sun from the terrace of the House of Commons. There, every advantage of light, shade, and colour meets the eye.

The terrace itself, in its magnificent length, is shadowed by the buildings, which, whatever their faults, appear to utmost advantage as the shades of night steal over them, and their fine outlines alone remain. The river laps the wall at your feet, a distant hum of traffic falls on the ear, the towers shut out the noise of the great city, and the calm is hardly disturbed by the steamers and lighters as they ply to and fro. The sun gilds the opposite shore, and throws lights and shadows which give a beauty, where, in cold dawn or the hard garish daylight, there is none. Sheds, outhouses, factories are wrapped in hazy golden mist; Lambeth Palace, buried in its rich foliage, looks a palace indeed. So had it been on this evening; and though they had waited so long that the sunlight was gone, it was even yet more enchanting from the beauty of the full moon, whose light reflected silver sheen from the wake of the steamer as it stole from under the dark arches of Westminster Bridge, or caught the flapping edges of the sails of the heavy barge drifting down with the stream.

‘How beautiful, how exquisite!’ said Frances, after a pause of many minutes, a pause so awkward that she felt constrained to say something. Sir George did not at first seem to be capable of answering, so much had the Duchess’s sudden movement taken him aback.

He paused. Yet he must speak to Frances; but it was folly to talk to her as he would have done to any one else, of the commonplaces of life, it was unworthy of himself. He must not ignore the past; he could not ignore the present; he must not give up his child-friend he thought. If she was weak, all the more reason that the man who had prided himself on his friendship for her should be yet a true friend, and sink himself entirely, merely thinking of her and how he might serve her. Harlech was not unworthy of her; nay, he even fancied that if he could think she had not been untrue to Claude, he would have been glad to feel she was likely to have so good a husband. Ah! but it must come. He must speak. George Hervey turned and bent his head towards Frances, whose dreamy eyes were watching the moonlight dancing on the wavelets below them.

He spoke. 'Frances, my dear;' the words were such as she had heard so often, but the voice was hard and hollow. She started from her reverie. 'I suppose I am a shy old fellow, and don't know the ways of the world, or I should have come to see you in St. James Square before now.' He paused; and Frances said almost unconsciously, 'Ah! yes, we did expect you.'

The '*we*' smote his heart with a heavy blow. It

was then quite true. Frances had already come to talk of Lord Harlech and herself as 'we.' It was a pang—one more amongst so many; but he must go on.

'Yes, my dear, you must forgive me, but I could not do it.' George Hervey would give no false excuse; plead no want of time. 'I am sure you know that I wish you every sort of happiness, there's no need for a formal visit for me to say that. I hope—'

'Ah! no indeed, Sir George. I never shall forget your kindness and Mrs. Drummond's. I hope to profit all through life by it.'

'I trust your life will be a very long happy one, my child, but you have heavy duties and responsibilities before you.'

'Yes, I know they are,' said Frances, 'but they are not more than I can bear, I hope, and you have given me so much of help to bear my home life,' she continued, rather surprised at the tone in which Sir George spoke, whilst he, thinking of advice given when she was engaged to Claude, hesitated a little before he added, 'Ah! but, my dear, this is so different; you have so altered a position. Don't think me hard on you.'

'You hard!' said Frances, almost in a whisper; and

added, 'but how is it different? It's the same thing, the same life as last year, only now I bear it better, I hope; thanks to your advice.'

Sir George started. 'Bear it better' was an odd phrase to apply to an engagement. Could it be possible that, for a second time, Frances had promised her hand without her heart? Impossible; but he had gone so far, and he knew her so well he thought he must speak out for her sake.

'My child,' he added, 'you are happy about your prospects this time, are you not?'

'This time' surprised Frances; but she answered, 'O yes, I think so. Besides, now I am determined to make the best of it, and things do not worry and annoy me as they did. Indeed,' she added earnestly, 'indeed I am happier than this time last year; I am learning to be less selfish.'

'But, forgive me,' said George Hervey, feeling that her tone was different from what he had expected, and puzzled to understand her motives. 'You will not be angry with me for saying this: You do care for him really, don't you?'

'Care for Lord Okehampton!' said Frances, looking up in amazement, and laughing. 'Why, yes, as much as I can; but he won't let me care much about him. I

think he likes his valet best ; but he endures me sometimes, and you know that is an improvement.'

George Hervey, for once in his life, looked hurt and annoyed, and answered in a constrained voice, 'Frances, you must know I am talking not of Lord Okehampton, but of your future husband.'

'My future husband !' said Frances aghast. 'But Claude is married. Oh, surely you know all that has happened ?'

George Hervey gazed at her in amazement. What did it, what could it all mean ? He would go on though now : 'Frances, am I mistaken in thinking I am speaking to Lord Harlech's intended wife ? Answer me.'

For one moment Frances looked at him as if she thought he had lost his senses ; and then seeing the stern earnest gaze he fixed on her, she answered with a voice that trembled so much she could hardly frame her lips to speak, 'Oh, what do you mean ? Why do you speak like that ? What is this about Lord Harlech ? I don't understand ! He is nothing to me nor I to him ;' and she leant her head on her hand, and covered her eyes to hide the tears that would spring to them.

The reaction was too great for George Hervey. He

could not speak, but he took her hand in both of his, and 'Forgive me' was all he could say.

The tears flowed down Frances' cheek, and she could not hide them. He caught a glimpse of one that fell on the little white hand. He could bear it no longer. Human flesh and blood could not endure more.

'My darling, my darling, forgive me,' was all he could utter. A deep heavy sob was his only answer; but the hand was in his, and was not withdrawn. He bent over her; Frances' tears flowed on.

'My dearest,' said George Hervey, 'listen one moment. I have loved you so intensely, so passionately. Will you tell me I may hope? My darling, but if you will trust me—'

All thought, all belief in the rumours he had heard had vanished into air, and in an instant he seemed to understand her as he never had done before.

There was a pause of some moments, and neither George Hervey nor Frances spoke; still the water lapped the foot of the wall, and still her Grace of Arlington detained the unwilling member for North Blankshire by her side. Frances' tears flowed silently through her fingers; and again George Hervey whispered in a hoarse low voice, 'My precious, will you not answer me?'

Frances looked up in his face, and said, 'I cannot

bear that *you* should have so misjudged me, you whom I had thought would have a better opinion of me. It is cruel of you ; even now do you believe me ?'

'Frances, do you then care for my opinion, and for what I may feel about you ? Oh, tell me. This is no child's-play. I have loved you through all these weary months, and have so often tried to kill the love that will not die. Child,' he said, and he took her hand in his, and held it as though he fain would keep it for ever ; 'could you come and make my home a paradise to me ? Could you come and be an old man's darling and sunshine ?'

He could say no more, the emotion overmastered him. We have said Frances Fortescue was no ordinary young lady, and now her behaviour was certainly unconventional in the extreme ; for as George Hervey paused and turned his appealing eyes to hers, her only answer was to put her other hand over his, which was holding hers, and murmur, 'It is too much happiness ;' and then, 'Is it really true ?'

As for George Hervey, the burst of happiness after all the misery he endured was so sudden, that he could only remain there gazing into her sweet face.

The night had fallen round them, and the pale beams of the moon alone lit up the figures of the loving pair who lingered on the terrace, and its soft radiance threw

a mysterious veil round them, which we will not attempt to penetrate. These two loved for the first time, and they had gone through sorrow enough to make the present joy the deeper. The love which bound them to each other was the growth of months, and was based on the only foundation which can make love lasting. They knew, esteemed, and trusted each other thoroughly and entirely.

But George Hervey remained even in that moment the courteous gentleman he was in every relation of life, and though he now, on listening to Frances' explanation, came to have more than a doubt of Flora's veracity, that doubt remained buried in his bosom. They lingered on that terrace, forgetful of time, legislation, and all but themselves, till, in very shame, as the clock struck 9.15, George Hervey, who now turned round for the first time, saw that the kind-hearted Duchess was seated alone on the bench. What had become of the member for North Blankshire he never asked, but silently pointing her out to Frances, he drew her arm through his, and with one murmured word, 'Bless you, my darling,' he led her straight up to the Duchess, and standing before her, he said, as his rich full voice swelled with pride and emotion, 'My dear kind lady, I don't know what excuse to make for my

behaviour and for our rudeness, but you will forgive me when I tell you that I have sought and won this prize, and that this evening has brought me a happiness I never thought to know in this world. Wish me joy, Duchess of Arlington ;' and long before he had finished his speech, the Duchess had jumped up, and, regardless of any spectators, had then and there kissed Frances, and well-nigh kissed Sir George also in her exuberant delight.

' Bless my soul, well, I am glad ! And to think of all this being my doing ! I am pleased, you two foolish people, the old woman saw something of what was going on. My stars, won't Miss Flora be sold ?' she chuckled. ' Serve her right, minx.'

Frances either did not hear or did not attend. Her heart was too full.

The Duchess continued : ' My dears, I'm dreadfully hungry, and I wanted to hear the rest of the debate. Would you mind going back ?'

' There is an old song, beginning, " What a little word can do," and I think our evening bears it out, darling,' said George Hervey, as with Frances' arm linked in his, he followed the Duchess, who declined all assistance, and went ahead so fast, that at one turn she was lost to sight.



Of the rest of the evening it matters not to speak. George Hervey lingered by Frances' side, not speaking to her much, and content with the unutterable joy of feeling that now, after so much tribulation, he had at last reached a pinnacle of happiness which was so far more than he had ever hoped to realize.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DISAPPOINTED RIVAL.

' Amo te solo,
Te solo amai,
Tu fosti il primo,
E tu sarai l'ultimo oggetto che adorerò. '

METASTASIO.

SILENTLY had Frances Fortescue sat all the morning in St. James Square, listening for Sir George's well-known step. She had had no chance to tell her mother of the change that had come in her life, for the children had been present at breakfast, and before it was over, Lord Okehampton had sent for his wife. Before she had left his room, though Frances knew it not, her lover had arrived, and asking only to see Lord Okehampton on important business, had been ushered in where he sat in his dressing-gown, sipping his chocolate, and listening while his patient wife read the debates. He happened to be in a good humour, and greeted his visitor with unusual cordiality.

‘Sir George, how early ! What good wind brings you here ? Let me congratulate you. I see you were very successful, and that the bill will be law soon.’ This was a wonderfully courteous speech from the man who never could see any merit in anything that did not originate in the Tory side of the house.

‘Yes, my lord, it will indeed ; but that victory was not the principal one that I won last night. I do indeed deserve to be congratulated, provided that you will ratify by your consent my prospect of happiness. Lord Okehampton—and you, dear lady—I came here to tell you that I last night ventured to ask Frances to share my lot in life, and that she has promised to be my wife, if you will give her to me.’

‘My dear sir,’ began Lord Okehampton, trying to rise, but reminded by the twinges of pain in his foot that he must moderate his feelings, ‘I am most sincerely glad, and so, I’m sure, is my lady. Wish you joy, of course I do ; but I wish her joy much more. No one that, politics apart, I more sincerely esteem than yourself ; and as for my stepdaughter, I think her a most estimable and excellent person, much improved, too, of late, I observe. My lady, I am sure you echo my sentiments ?’

But my lady’s blue eyes were full of tears, and she

could hardly answer; still she managed to say, 'I'm so very very glad, Sir George, but oh, how I shall miss her!'

They talked on for half-an-hour. Now that such a marriage was settled, Lady Okehampton was radiant with joy. She knew George Hervey's worth, and felt that she could with a safe conscience give her child to him, for though she had never acknowledged it to herself, many had been her misgivings during Frances's engagement to Claude, and never once, when released from the thralldom of Sir Victor's will, had she uttered the faintest regret on the subject of the engagement so abruptly broken off.

They had insisted on Sir George telling them all about the way the proposal had come about, and Lady Okehampton was declaring the Duchess was a great darling, when a knock at the door interrupted the conversation, and the announcement of 'Miss Cavendish in the drawing room to see your Ladyship,' broke up the conversation.

'Dear Miss Cavendish, she will be so glad, I am sure,' said the simple-minded woman as she left the room, insisting on carrying off Sir George with her. Of the truth of this sentiment George Hervey had his doubts, but he followed in her wake, as he was told by Lady Okehampton.

ton that Frances was in the drawing-room, and there, true enough, he found her and also his cousin Flora, who, unaware that he was in the house or anywhere likely to see her, had ignored Frances' presence after a mere exchange of 'How d'ye do?' and was at that moment engaged in surveying herself in one of the pier-glasses. They entered quietly, and nothing but Frances' happy 'Oh, mother,' revealed that anything unusual had occurred. But Flora was not long left in uncertainty, for George Hervey walked straight up to Frances, and taking her hand and pressing it to his lips, he said, 'I'm here, as you see, and I've already done a good day's work, for I have your stepfather and your mother's free and kindest consent to giving me the treasure I have won.' He paused, and then in another voice he added, 'Flora, you are the first of my relations to whom I have the opportunity of presenting my future wife, as such. As you know Miss Fortescue, there is no need for me to say more.'

It would be well-nigh impossible to convey a just impression of the severity and dignity of Sir George Hervey's manner as he addressed his cousin, but the expression which for a moment overspread Flora's face no words could describe. The mask was off for one instant, and in that instant George Hervey had read

the dark traces of the concentrated spirit of evil, which, once seen, he could never forget. That expression spoke of the diabolical hatred, and baffled will, and rage which almost choked her to keep under. She could not answer. Had she opened her mouth, the venom must have issued forth; but even in her fury she was mistress enough of herself. Fortunately Lady Okehampton, who on these occasions was invaluable from her voluble prattle, interrupted—

‘My dear Miss Cavendish, is not this delightful? so much the best thing for my dear child. I am sure you are as glad as I am. But come with me; we won’t spoil sport, will we? I’ve a thousand things to say, and we must talk over this matter, which I have only just heard.’

The door opened: ‘His Lordship wishes to see your Ladyship.’

‘Dear, dear, what a pity now, and I know he will keep me till luncheon. I’m so sorry. I can’t ask you to stay, or—but you will come very soon, I’m sure. I must go,’ and Lady Okehampton returned to her Lord and the debates.

By this time Flora had to a certain degree recovered her self-possession, and she even succeeded so far as to compose her face enough to say, ‘Dear Miss Fortescue,

and you, George, I wish you all happiness, I'm sure. I did not expect this quite, though I'm certain that, as you, Miss Fortescue, have had some experience of engagements, you will have made a point of being sure this time. But I really must go. I'm going to meet some people at the Horticultural. Goodbye, my dear friends.'

Gravely and with studied courtesy did George Hervey open the door for his cousin. But why did he shake his head as he watched her figure retreating down the stairs, and come back, and, taking Frances' head between his hands, press his lips on her forehead, and murmur, 'Thank God! Oh, darling, Heaven grant this may be for your happiness as well as mine!'

We will leave the lovers. They are happy—happier than most people under the circumstances. They had no thorns now in their path. Frances' astonishment was unbounded when she heard how she had been reported to be engaged to Lord Harlech, and we rather think she confessed to Sir George that the main inducement to talk to Lord Harlech had been to listen to the *κῶδος* that he always lavished on her friend Sir George. Then also she had to tell him the truth of the history about herself and Claude, and laughingly informed him that it was not she that would not marry

Claude, but Claude who had released her from her engagement. The first favour that Frances asked of her intended husband was, that together they should pay a visit that afternoon to Helen and Claude, and that he would be kind to them and help them now in their exceeding straits. This was an occupation after George Hervey's heart, and to it he acceded willingly enough.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BITER BIT.

‘ I am disgraced, impeached, and baffled here.’

Richard II.

MARVELLOUS it is to observe how quickly anything of the matrimonial kind becomes known in London, be it a domestic row between Brown and his wife about the bills of the latter, be it a more serious scandal relating to the too frequent visits of Popham of the — Guards to the house of the beautiful but flirtatious Mrs. Mackay, or the even more interesting fact of the proposal which took place only on Monday night, at the termination of that dinner of Lady Balmacarra's at Greenwich, and which, though this is but Wednesday, we see in this morning's *Owl*, and of which we have already heard all the particulars from John Arthurs. Why it is we cannot pretend to say, but of the fact none who have lived three months in the so-called ‘London world,’ will doubt for a moment.

And the news of Sir George Hervey's engagement formed no exception to the rule. He had been but little in London, and if he had been reckoned a prize by mothers in bygone days, that time had almost passed away, but still he had hardly proposed before the fact of his engagement became known, and awakened a fresh interest in him. Who had not heard of the man who had as good as brought in and carried a bill, and had proposed and had been accepted on the same evening? The rumour reached far and wide, and by the following afternoon it was a well-known fact.

Shall we attempt to describe the agony of spiteful rage in which Flora Cavendish passed the morning? It would be beyond the power of pen. It was a combination of failure, and of failure on the one point on which all her energies had been concentrated,—failure which she felt was irretrievable, for George Hervey's manner, quiet though it had been, had let her know that at last he had seen through her and her schemes.

She knew that she had forfeited the esteem of the one man in the world for whom she had played a game of devotion and religion that she never felt, and the woman's rage was in proportion to the loss of wasted energies.

There was nothing for it ; she must conceal her feel-


ings. Moreover, she felt she could not sit alone ; so, as a first step towards deadening her despair, she rose from the sofa where she had thrown herself, and summoning her maid, every meretricious aid of dress was invoked to make this despairing woman, if possible, eclipse herself in the voluptuous grace of which she was so proud ; and as Flora stepped into the carriage to join the friends who were to meet her at the Horticultural Show, never had she looked more bewitchingly, dangerously beautiful. But here again was she destined to meet with disappointment, and again the painful recollections were forced on her. The friend who accompanied her was none other than Lady Osmond Willoughby, and her sole topic of conversation was of the marriage, which she imagined that she only knew of. Her comments, far from appeasing Flora, only added oil to the flames raging in her heart. Lady Osmond expatiated on the suitableness of the alliance, and told a long story of how it reminded her exactly of her own marriage, and of all the proposals which had been made to her. Flora fled from her to a stand of flowers in a distant part of the building, and proceeded to search in her catalogue for the numbers. She was interrupted by a voice overflowing with self-satisfaction and triumph, which interrupted her with the following words—

‘ Ah, Miss Cavendish! dee-lighted to see you.’

Flora drew herself up to her utmost height, and if a look could have crushed the man who addressed her, such a look John Grimshaw received from the lady, who at another period of her life had goaded him to a mad love by the encouragement of both look and manner.

Wherefore, then, at this moment had John Grimshaw become indifferent to the gracious or ungracious looks of his former idol?—Because his only wish was to inflict punishment, to sting if he could do no more; and he fancied he held in his hand a lash that might hit hard.

‘ Charming day,’ he continued, regardless of Flora Cavendish’s averted head; ‘ charming. Pretty flower that: but this rose is delightful, puts one in mind of your part of the world. By the bye, what a bear I am, not to wish you joy of the news I have just heard. I am sure,’ he added, slightly raising his voice, ‘ that you must be enchanted with Sir George’s marriage. I have observed that you always take such an interest in all that concerns him; and now that he really has won such a treasure, so young, so beautiful, and so clever and unassuming, you must be indeed satisfied for your *protégée*. I suppose you mean to give him away? Ha, ha!’ and Grimshaw’s eyes rested with a hard, bitter look on the fair lady before him.



Had he expected an outbreak Grimshaw was grievously disappointed. Flora Cavendish at all events had not thrown away the time in which she had studied to act and to conceal her feelings. She knew as well as if she had heard it from his lips what the late agent's object was in thus speaking. And there was something of the grandeur of a fallen angel in the way in which she turned her magnificent profile towards the man she so thoroughly despised, and said—

‘Am I making a mistake, sir, or did I understand from my brother that you no longer acted in any business capacity for my family? If so, I am at a loss to imagine under what other possible circumstances you would presume to address me. Lady Osmond, shall we move on? I want you to see how perfectly lovely are some of the orchids.’

As she moved away the only sign she gave of her concentrated rage were the words, ‘Ah, *canaille d’homme*,’ but the delicate cambric handkerchief was in strange tatters, and the marks of teeth were very visible on the part that the fair calm woman had held to her face for a few moments after this interview.

Again in this second piece of revenge did John Grimshaw find the cup was not so sweet as he had expected it would be.

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CHAPTER XLV.

HAPPINESS AT LAST.

'They were alone once more ; for them to be
Thus was another Eden ; they were never
Weary, unless when separate ; the tree
Cut from its forest root of years, the river
Dammed from its fountain, the child from the knee
And breast maternal weaned at once for ever,
Would wither less than these two torn apart.'

BYRON.

IT was late in August, and in the gorgeous beauty of the full summer time, that a very happy pair were walking up and down a beech walk in the gardens at Cossington. Who were the couple ? Frances Hervey and her sweet, gentle sister-in-law. Frances had been married about three weeks, and the previous evening the bride and bridegroom had arrived at Cossington, where Mrs. Drummond had remained to receive them, just to get a peep of the two beings she loved more than anything on earth ; and then to take her leave, and let them find their level. Frances had been walk-

ing up and down this beech walk for half-an-hour, trying to persuade Mrs. Drummond not to hurry away, but to stay and help her to get into George's ways, but it was of no avail.

'My dear child, it would never do; you don't want an old woman with you; it is more of happiness than I ever thought to know, to see you and George together, my dear little sister; if you only knew how I used to hope against hope that George might some day find such an one as yourself to make his home what it ought to be. I am so thankful.'

'If I can but be worthy of him,' said Frances, almost to herself. 'Kate, dear, you will help and teach me, won't you, as of old? and tell me if you think he is happy as I ought to make him?'

There was an arm round her waist that she had little expected; for the soft moss had prevented the sound of her husband's footsteps reaching her ears; as a voice that brought the look of intensest happiness to her face answered—

'What is this my little wife is asking?—that she need be told I am happy.' Frances and her husband looked round, but the sister had already walked nearly out of earshot.

'My precious one,' he continued; 'can you dream of

one half of the blessed sunshine you are to me ! What have I ever done to deserve this peace ? Not more than five months have passed since I realized how I loved you, darling ; it seems strange to think of that time now. Did you ever guess how I loved you before you left this place, my wife ? I tried desperately hard to conceal the feeling.'

'Never,' said Frances earnestly.

'Ah, then, thank God that I did my duty. My Frances, yes ; "*faire ce que dois adviennne que pourra*," ---it is a good guide and a comforter also.'

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